

SEEDS OF ADMONISHMENT AND REFORM

Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597 AH)



al-Ḥāfiẓ

Abū'l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī [d. 597AH]

SEEDS of
ADMONISHMENT
and REFORM

being a translation of his
'Kitāb al-Laṭā'if fil Wā'iẓ'



Every breath we take is taking us closer to death. The time we spend in this world is short, the time we are held in our graves is long, and the punishment for following our lowly desires is calamitous.

Seeds of Admonishment and Reform

al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū'l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī

Translated from the original Arabic by
Aymān ibn Khālīd



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Forward

All praise is for Allāh the Most High, and may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon our master and leader, Muḥammad (ﷺ), his noble Family and Companions and all those who follow them in goodness until the Last Day.

In your hands is the fifth book in the series, from the illustrious and inimitable scholar of the 6th century Hijrī, Imām Ibn al-Jawzī, may Allāh have mercy upon him. He penned this amazingly deep and thought-provoking work in powerful prose, accompanied with intense imagery designed to impart profound points of benefit. His lessons and sermons are uniquely arranged and tastefully peppered with beauty of words and expressions, of which the translator tried to maintain in English.

Its message contains an essence of the human condition, which diverts man away from the mesmerising effect of this transient and material world with its attractions - and brings back the real focus and purpose of man's role and responsibility in life. Allāh said in the Qur'ān: *"And the life of this world is only the enjoyment of deception (a thing that deceives)."* [Āl-'Imrān: 185]; *"...and they rejoice in the life of the world, whereas the life of this world as compared with the Hereafter is but a brief passing enjoyment."* [al-Ra'd: 26] and *"And what-*

ever you have been given is an enjoyment of the life of (this) world and its adornment, and that (Hereafter) which is with Allāh is better and will remain forever. Have you then no sense?" [al-Qaṣaṣ: 60]

Allāh also gave people a sense of urgency in returning back to Him, making *tawbah* and seeking His forgiveness: *"And hasten forth in the way (which leads to) forgiveness from your Rabb, and for Paradise as wide as the heavens and the earth, prepared for the Muttaqīn."* [Āl-ʿImrān, 133]

In *ʿFāḍaʿil al-Dhikr*, Ibn Jawzī wrote that one of the Salaf said: 'O son of Adam! You need your share in this life, but need your share in the Hereafter even more. If you took care of your share in this life, then you will lose your share in the Hereafter and are soon bound to lose your share in this life too. If you took care of your share in the Hereafter, you will also win your full share in this life with ease.'

May Allāh reward the translator, and all those involved in production of this work, from its manuscript stages to its publication, only Allāh can reward them, for the service they continue to render for the sake of the Dīn. I ask Allāh, the Most High, to add these efforts to the scale of our good deeds on a Day whereon neither wealth nor children will avail.

Translator's Note

All praise is for Allāh, after approximately eleven months of hard work translating and reviewing this work, the book came to see the light.

Despite the modest size of this book, it is from the more complicated type of book to translate from Arabic. This is due to the author's ornately figurative style, with aspects of metaphors and expressive rhetoric he used. The sentences are combined with profound Qur'ānic verses that deliver particular meanings relevant to the point being addressed, which in itself requires an in-depth knowledge of various sciences. This complexity adds more value to the book, which is what author intended - He said about this book: "Within this book I enveloped delicate phrases, subtle and elusive clues and indicative hints that I have laid out their words from various disseminated arts."

The original Arabic of the book is written in a rhetorically eloquent and delicate way that depends on concise statements, and indicative hints. That being said, it seems the author intended the book for a particular group of students of knowledge and intellectuals whose knowledge extends to encompass the sciences of

Qur'ān, Arabic language, history, biographies and much more. This would explain what he meant with his saying: "therefore only those who do not accept the ordinary and the low shall enjoy it."

Due to the aforementioned nature of the original book, I focused on delivering the intended meaning while ensuring to maintain some of the beauty of the articulated literary style as much as possible. Notwithstanding, I avoided falling into literal translation in order to protect the originality of sentences that cannot be delivered in translation and thus, explained them in the footnotes.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū'l-Faraj 'Abdu'l-Raḥmān ibn Jawzī

His Name and Lineage

He is Abū'l-Faraj Jāmal al-Dīn 'Abdu'l-Raḥmān ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Ibn 'Ubayd Allāh Ibn al-Jawzī al-Qurashī al-Tamimi al-Bakrī from the family of Muḥammad ibn Abū Bakr *al-Ṣiddīq*, al-Baghdādī al-Ḥanbalī.¹

His Birth and Upbringing

He was born in 509 or 510 A.H. Upon reaching adolescence, his aunt took him to Ibn Nāṣir from whom he learned a great deal. He came to love preaching while barely having reached the age of puberty, and from then started to give sermons to the people.

His father passed away when he was three years old so his aunt

¹ *Thail al-Raḍatain*, p.21, *al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah*, p. 13/26.

took care of him. His relatives were copper merchants so at times in hadith hearings he would write his name as 'Abdu'l-Raḥmān ibn 'Alī al-Ṣaffār [i.e. The Coppersmith].

His first ḥadīth hearing was in 556 A.H., as cited by al-Dhahabī.²

While still very young he became known as a religious person who would not socialise with anyone and would not eat from any food whose source was doubtful. He would only leave his house for prayer and he would not play with other kids. He was a person of very great determination and ambition and he spent all his life busy in seeking knowledge, preaching and authoring.³

His Teachers

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn al-Jawzī has already introduced his teachers in his book *Mashyakhat Ibn al-Jawzī* [i.e. the scholars who taught Ibn al-Jawzī] where he listed many of them. In the field of ḥadīth he benefitted from accompanying Ibn Nāṣir, in Qur'ān and *Adab* [i.e. Manners] from Sibṭ al-Khiyāt and Ibn al-Jawālīqī. He was the last to narrate from al-Dinawari and al-Mutawakkili.⁴

His Students

Those who narrated from him include his son and companion, the great scholar Muḥyī al-Dīn Yūsuf who was a teacher in the

² *Thail al-Raḍdatain*, 21, *Thail 'ala Tabaqāt al-Ḥanabila*, 1/401, *Shatharāt al-Thahab*, 4/330.

³ *al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah*, 13/29, *Said al-Khāṭir*, 238.

⁴ *Siyar al-A'lam al-Nubulā'*, 21/366, 367.

institute of al-Musta'sim billāh, his oldest son 'Alī al-Nāsikh, his grandson, the preacher Shams al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Farghalī al-Hanafī the author of *Mir'āt al-Zamān* (Mirror of Time), al-Ḥāfiẓ 'Abd al-Ghanī, Shaykh Muwaffaq al-Dīn Ibn Qudāma, Ibn al-Dubaythī, Ibn al-Nājjār and al-Diyā.⁵

His Children

His grandson Abū al-Muẓfir and majority of those who wrote his biography say that he had three sons:

1. The oldest of them, Abū Bakr 'Abd al-'Azīz: He became a jurist in the school of Aḥmad and took knowledge from Abū al-Waqt, Ibn Nāṣir, al-Armawī and a group of his father's teachers. He traveled to the city of al-Musul where he preached and held sermons there for which he earned the people full acceptance. It is said that the family of al-Zahrazurī used to be jealous of him so they made someone put poison in his drink which caused him to die in al-Mūsul in 554 A.H. during the lifetime of his father.⁶
2. Abū al-Qāsim Badr al-Dīn 'Alī al-Nāsikh*
3. Abū Muḥammad Yūsuf Muḥyi al-Dīn⁷: He was the most

⁵ *Siyar al-A'lam al-Nubulā'*, 21, 367.

⁶ *Tha'il Tabaqāt al-Hanabila*, 1/430, 431.

* Publishers note: For a detail biography of him please refer to, *The Sincere Council to the Seekers of Sacred Knowledge*, by Ibn Jawzī, published by Dār as-Sunnah, Birmingham, UK, 2011.

⁷ cf. *Siyar al-A'lam al-Nubulā'*, 23/372, *al-Ibar*, 5/237, *Dūwal al-Islām*, 2/122, *al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah*, 13/203, *Tha'il Tabaqāt al-Hanabila*, 2/258-261, *al-Uṣjud al-Masbūk*, 635, *Shatharāt al-Thahab*, 5/286287, Ibn Shaṭṭī: *Mukhtasar Tabaqāt al-Hanabila*, p.57.

intelligent and youngest son as he was born in 580 A.H. He became involved in preaching and held sermons after his father, in which he excelled and by which he was looked up to by his confreres. He then was appointed to control and supervise markets of Baghdād, and after that he was assigned to deliver the messages of the caliphs to kings of other different regions peculiarly to the Ayyūbī family in the Shām region. He held the position of teacher in the institute of caliph al-Mustāʿsim in 640 A.H. till he was killed in prison in 656 A.H. by Hulaku who occupied Baghdād and destroyed it. His three sons Jāmal al-Dīn, Sharaf al-Dīn and Tāj al-Dīn were killed with him. He has authored many works, including *Māʿadīn al-Abriḡ fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-ʿAẓīẓ* and *al-Madhab al-Aḥmad fī Madhab Aḥmad*. Unlike his brother Abu al-Qāsim, he was a dutiful son who honored his father and treated him well.

His grandson mentioned that Ibn al-Jawzī had many daughters; Rabiʿa, Sharaf al-Nisāʾ, Zainab, Jauhara, Sitt al-ʿUlama al-Sughra and Sitt al-ʿUlama al-Kubrā.⁸

His Uniqueness as a Preacher

Excellent indeed are the words of al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dhahabī about him: 'He was the leading figure in reminding the people and had no equal. He would recite pleasant poetry and eloquent prose spontaneously and his fine words and moving speech was abundant. There has never been anyone like him, not before him and not after him. He is the carrier of the flag of exhortation in its various forms. He had a pleasant appearance and a good voice and his talks had an impact on peoples' hearts. His lifestyle in general was

⁸ *Mirʾāt al-Zamān*, 8/503, Abū Shamma: *Thaīl al-Rawḍatāin*, 26.

beautiful.⁹ He also said: 'I believe there will not be another one like him.'¹⁰

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Rajab said: 'So we conclude that his gatherings of exhortation were one of a kind and nobody had heard of anything like them. They were gatherings of great benefit where the heedless would be reminded, the ignorant would come to know, the sinners would repent and the polytheists would become Muslims.'¹¹

His Works and Effects

Shaikh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah said in *al-Ajwiba al-Miṣrīyyah*: 'Shaikh Abū'l-Faraj excelled in many sciences and has many writings to his account. He would write on many topics, and as I counted his works I found them to be over one thousand in number. Afterwards, I found out about other works as well.'¹²

Having mentioned some of his books, al-Dhahabī said: 'I don't know of a scholar who has written what this man has.'¹³

The virtuous teacher 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-'Alūjī has written a book on his works which was printed in Baghdād in 1965. In this piece he researched their titles, their copies and copies that had been

⁹ *Siyar al-A'lam al-Nubulā'*, 21/367.

¹⁰ *Siyar al-A'lam al-Nubulā'*, 21/384.

¹¹ *Tha'il Tabaqāt al-Ḥanabila*, 1/410.

¹² *Tha'il Tabaqāt al-Ḥanabila*, 1/415, *al-Tāj al-Mukallal*, 70.

¹³ *Tatbkiyat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, 1344.

printed and put them in alphabetic order. Whoever wishes to know about these books should refer to this work, keeping in mind that many of the manuscripts mentioned therein by al-'Alūjī have now been printed.

He authored approximately 300 books, some of his printed works include:

- *Talqīb Fuhūm Abli al-Athār fi Mukhtasari al-Siyari wal Akebbār.*¹⁴ [Only a portion has been printed]
- *Al-Athkiyā' wa Akebbarahum.*¹⁵ [Printed]
- *Manāqib 'Umar ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz.*¹⁶ [Printed]
- *Rawbu al-Arwāh.*¹⁷ [Printed]
- *Shudhūr al-'Uqūd fi Tarikh al-'Ubūd.*¹⁸ [Manuscript]
- *Zād al-Masir fi 'Ilm al-Tafsir.*¹⁹ [Printed]
- *Al-Muntadham fi Tārikh al-Mulūk wal Umam.*²⁰ [Only 6 volumes have been printed]
- *Al-Dhabab al-Masbūk fi Siyaril Mulūk.*²¹ [Manuscript]
- *Al-Hamqa wal Mughaffalīn.*²² [Printed]

¹⁴ The book mentions the historical reports concerning the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions.

¹⁵ A literature book in which he includes stories of intellectual people..

¹⁶ The book details the virtues of the Caliph, 'Umar ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz.

¹⁷ The book explains the concept of spirit and spirituality

¹⁸ An abridged version of the known history book *Tarikh al-Mulūk wal Umam*.

¹⁹ The book explains the science of *Tafsir*.

²⁰ The book mentions the history of nations and kings.

²¹ The book focuses on leaders and kings throughout history.

²² A literature book in which he reports the stories of idiots and fools.

- *Al-Wafa fi Fada'ili al-Mustafa*.²³ [Printed]
- *Manaqib 'Umar ibn al-Khattab*.²⁴ [Printed]
- *Manaqib Aḥmad ibn Hanbal*.²⁵ [Printed]
- *Gharīb al-ḥadīth*.²⁶ [Printed]
- *Al-Tabqīq*.²⁷ [Only the first volume has been printed]

And also a considerable number of works in other fields of knowledge.

His Death

Ibn al-Jawzī passed away on Friday the 12th of Ramaḍān in 597 A.H and was buried next to the grave of Imam Aḥmad ibn Hanbal in the cemetery of Bāb Ḥarb.²⁸

²³ The book relates the virtues of the Prophet (ﷺ).

²⁴ The book relates the virtues of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab.

²⁵ The book relates the virtues of Imam Aḥmad ibn Hanbal.

²⁶ The book explains one major aspect of the science of ḥadīth i.e. the ghareeb ḥad"th.

²⁷ The book examines the authenticity of narrations used in the known book '*al-Ta'liq al-kabir*' of al-Qadi Abū Ya'la, and how classification of ḥadīth effected scholars views.

²⁸ For a more detailed biography of al-Hāfiẓ Ibn al-Jawzī, refer to: Ibn Athir's *al-Kamil*, 12/71, Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī: *Mir'at al-Zamān*, 8/481, al-Mundhirī: *al-Takmila*, Biography 608, al-Bāghḡhal: *al-Mashyakha*, 140, Abū Shāmma: *Thail al-Raḍdatain*, 21, Ibn al-Sā'i: *al-Jāmi'*, 9/65, Ibn Khalkān: *al-Wafayāt*, 3/140, al-Dhahabī: *al-Ibar*, 4/297, *Dīwal al-Islām*, 2/79, *Tathkīrat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, 4/1342, *Sīyar al-A'lām al-Nubulā'*, 21/365, Ibn Kathīr: *al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah*, 13/26, Ibn Rajab: *Thail Tabaqāt al-Hanabila*, 1/399, al-Jazari: *Ghāyat wa'l-Nihāyah*, 1/375, Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khan: *al-Tāj al-Mukallal*, 70, Ibn Shattī: *Mukhtasar Tabaqāt al-Hanabila*, p. 42.

Prelude

THE SHAYKH, the Ḥāfiẓ, the Imām of his time, the incomparably unique scholar of his age, Jamal ad-Dīn Abū al-Faraj ‘Abd al-Rahman bin ‘Alī ibn al-Jawzī said:

All praise is due to Allāh for what He Bestows, a praise with which He will be Pleased. And may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon whom He gathered all guiding signs and whose name is mentioned after the Name of the Truth (i.e. Allāh) whenever Allāh is remembered (i.e. Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) is also mentioned), and this is enough an honour for him. And may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon his family, his companions and those who follow his example.

Within this book I enveloped delicate phrases, subtle and elusive clues and indicative hints that I have laid out their words from various disseminated arts; therefore only those who do not accept the ordinary and the low shall enjoy reading it. I intend with this book to be like a pattern sewed on the garment of sermons and a gemstone for the ring of speeches whereby its words affect the heart before reaching the hearing. That being said, from Allāh alone, I hope this book to be a source of benefit.

CHAPTER ONE

In the saying of Allāh: “*He is al-Awwal and al-Āhkir, al-Zāhir and al-Bāṭin; He has knowledge of all things.*”¹

NEITHER DOES HIS ATTRIBUTE as the *al-Awwal* entail that He has a beginning, nor does His Attribute as *al-Āhkir* imply that He has an end, nor does His Attribute as *al-Zāhir* connote deficiency, and nor does His Attribute as *al-Bāṭin* denote any form of inactiveness in His Attributes.

The charge of (asking) “why?” is tamed and silenced when it stands before His Divine Presence, and the blaze of the Truth holds back the hand of (asking) “how?”, and the lights of the Exalted and Glorified daze and blind the eyes of human thoughts.

¹ *al-Ḥadīd* 57: 3

The Prophet (ﷺ) explained these in a succinct and clear way while addressing his Lord, “You are the First, there was none before You. You are the Last, there will be none after You. You are the Manifest, there is nothing above You. You are the Inward, there is nothing close to you.” see the English translation of ‘*Expansion to the Beautiful and Perfect Names of Allāh*’ p94; published by Dār as-Sunnah Publishers 2008.

The footsteps of beseeching (the Lord) come to a stand at the sacred zone of submission (to Allāh); Exalted is He from having any likeness or equal; Exalted is He for He is above being represented and exemplified, for indeed, confusion and bafflement only happens in respect to those that have equivalents or peers.

The *Mushabbih* (i.e. one who draws resemblance between Allāh's Attributes with the attributes of the creation) is contaminated by the innards of anthropomorphism, and the *Mu'aṭṭillah* (i.e. one who denies, negates or rejects the Names and Attributes of Allāh) is defiled by the blood of denial, whereas the one upon the truth enjoys the pure milk which lies in between the innards and blood. Indeed, He is the Exalted (nothing is like unto Him), far removed is He from having His Actions questioned with "why?" His Existence cannot be questioned with "when?", and His Essence cannot be questioned with "how?", and His Attributes cannot be contained by "when?" Whoever looks through the mirror of His Attribute of *Ṣamadiyyah* (i.e. the Eternal Refuge) will realise the transcendence of the Creator, and cognize that such mirror cannot reflect the image of partners or the shadow of semblance (i.e. resembling Allāh's Attributes with the creation). "Think and reflect on the signs of Allāh, and do not contemplate the Essence of Allāh, otherwise you will be ruined."²

When conjunctivitis encounters the wind, its severity increases - [the example of this is like] the mosquitoes when they complained to (Prophet) Sulaymān (*'alayhi as-salām*), about their suf-

² *Shu'ab al-Īmān* (109): It has been reported as a statement of the Prophet (ﷺ), which all scholars declared very weak, and as a statement of Ibn 'Abbās which al-Ḥāfiẓ ibn Hajr accepted and so declared its chain as good. The meaning of the text is also proven authentic in other ḥadīth - cf. Bukhārī (3276) and Muslim (135).

fering due to the wind, Sulaymān (*'alayhi as-salām*) summoned the wind [in order to question it]. When the mosquitoes heard that, they began to retreat to which Sulaymān (*'alayhi as-salām*) asked: "Why are you leaving?" the mosquitoes said: "If we had the strength to face the wind, we would have not complained to you about it!"

CHAPTER TWO

In Reminder of the Prophet (ﷺ)

WHEN OUR PROPHET (ﷺ) saw His people entrenched in every form of polytheism, he fled from their midst to the Arab desert, seeking retreat in a secluded area at the cave of Hira' where he sought purity and quiet contemplation. But, his seclusion was then interrupted (by Angel Jibra'īl ('*alayhi as-salām*')), requesting the silent worshipper to break his silence, by commanding him to

اقْرَأْ

“recite”

[*al-'Alaq* 96: 1]

However, the tongue of the incapacitated human uttered, ‘I am not one who can recite.’ All the while the state of the Prophet curiously speaks for itself, saying, yesterday, I was just a child in the lap of Ḥalīmah¹, and following the death of my father I was assigned to the guardianship of my uncle Abū Ṭālib. [This encounter] made him suffer from a fever, so he asked (his wife) to

¹ Ḥalīmah al-Sā'diyyah; the wet-nurse of the Prophet (ﷺ) who breastfed him.

be covered and wrapped (in a blanket), but then the eerie apparition returned, addressing the one laid down (i.e. the Prophet), calling him by appellation,

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَرْفُلُ ۝

“O you who wraps himself [in clothing]”

[*al-Muzzammil* 73: 1]

Verily, you are the best from among all kinds of fruits, so get up from your bed; O you who carries on his back the burden to go forth and say [the word of truth], O you upon whom the gift of

قُفَاذِرٌ ۝

“arise and warn others”

[*al-Mudaththir* 74: 2]

has been bestowed. O you for whom non-sentient creatures and non-living objects moved; the trunk of a tree yearned for him, the wolf spoke to him, the stones in his hand glorified Allāh, and the mountain shook with agitation [when he stood on it]; all of these creations expressed their longing for him, each in its very own language.

His people (i.e. the disbelievers of Quraysh²) were struck with astonishment of the high honour that had been bestowed upon him, and so with resentful tongues they uttered,

لَوْلَا نَزَلَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ عَظِيمٍ ۝

“Why was this Qur’ān not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?”

² The most famous and honourable Arab tribe to which the Prophet (ﷺ) belonged.

[Zukhruf 43: 31]

Destiny in return responded, why do you show surprise and raise objection to a palm-tree raised high in the sky, which originated from nothing more than a seed?!

أَلَمْ نَخْلُقْكُمْ مِّن مَّاءٍ مَّهِينٍ ﴿٣١﴾

“Did We not create you from a liquid disdained”

[*al-Mursalāt* 77: 20]

Thenceforth, the severity of the disease of enviousness (in their hearts) caused their hearts to be sick so they perceived him [the Prophet (ﷺ)] with a jaundiced eye that distorted to them his (noble) reality, saying, he is a madman!

O Muḥammad (ﷺ), the encompassing of beauty, what they falsely attribute to you is not the colour of your countenance, but rather the impression of their jaundice; for you are, ultimately beautiful and entirely perfect, as significant as the centerpiece in a necklace, and the adornment of time. Your greatness over the other Prophets is like the greatness of the sun compared to the moon, as the ocean compared to raindrops, and as heaven compared to earth. You are their leader and light, and their message revolves around you. You are the axis of their orbit, the center of their dune, the centerpiece of their necklace, the inscription on their gemstone, the main verse of their poem, the sun of their morn, the crescent of their night, the pearl of their castles, and the solidity of their endeavors. The creation is mere images, the Prophets are their hearts, and our Prophet, Muḥammad (ﷺ), is the mystic of these hearts.

When he was taken on the Night Journey (i.e. *al-Isrā'*)³, he was carried to the Masjid of *al-Aqṣā* where the worshippers amongst Prophets came out of their cloisters, and he lead them in prayer, for he is indeed the peerless hermit. If Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) and 'Isā (*'alayhi as-salām*) were alive [in his time], 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb⁴ (*radīy Allāhu 'anhu*) will still be told, "refrain from it"⁵ - for there is no need to light a lamp when the sun shines [meaning the guidance he was sent with superseded and surpassed what the previous Prophets had been given].

He was sent with the merciful and gracious religion that made the legislations ordained upon previous Prophets look as (difficult as) fasting the month of Ramaḍān in comparison to which his revealed religion is like (as easy and joyful as celebrating) the day of 'Īd. Paradise and Hell were shown to him, and so he realised the cure before preparing the medicine. When the sword of,

³ *al-Isrā'* is Arabic title of the trip he made from Makkah to Jerusalem overnight.

⁴ 'Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb: Abū Ḥafs 'Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb ibn Nufayl al-Qurashī al-'Adawī, the second Rightly Guided *Khalīfah* and one of the ten promised Paradise. He accepted Islām five years before the *Hijrah* and his acceptance was a great victory for the Muslims. He witnessed every battle that the Prophet (ﷺ) witnessed. He was martyred in the year 23H.

⁵ The author refers to the ḥadīth when 'Umar copied part of the Torah in Arabic then brought it to the Prophet, and began to read it to him. As he read, the Prophet's (ﷺ) face changed colour. One of the men of the Anṣār said, 'Woe to you Ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb! Can you not see the face of the Messenger of Allāh?' Thereupon, the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "*Do not ask the People of the Book about anything for they will not guide you when they have gone astray. (If you listen to them) You will either disbelieve in what is right or believe in what is false. By Allāh, if Prophet Mūsā had been alive today, he would have been obliged to follow me.*" [Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Hajr said that one of its narrators is Jābir Al-Ju'fi and he is weak in narrating]

أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ

“Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood”

[Nūr 24: 30]

broke the dawn of the night of Ascension (*al-Mi'raj*)⁶, the Angels had thought that Allāh's Signs were exclusive to the inhabitants of Heaven, but they had not to wait long until they witnessed the Sign of the earth having risen. Indeed, there is no wonderment when Angels rise and ascend for they are winged creatures, but the surprise and wonder is when a wingless body whose very nature necessitates its attachment to earth rises and ascends. On that night, Angel Jibra'īl was the guide [of the Prophet] to success but when he arrived at a place to which even he had no access to, he realised that truthfulness was gracious so he said [addressing the Prophet (ﷺ)]; (I leave you) here with your Lord.

He found that he was by himself in close proximity to his Lord; thereupon, the awe of veneration and glorification which left the corporeal tongue [of his nature] at a loss for words caused him to utter,

لَا أُحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ،

“I cannot count the praises that are due to You.”⁷

The overawing magnificence of the Lord would have burnt him had not the coolness of the water sprays of “Peace be upon you” saved him. On the Day of Judgment, Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) is his

⁶ It refers to the Night Journey where he was taken from Makkah to Jerusalem then ascended from there to heaven.

⁷ Reported by Muslim #489.

companion, ʿĪsā (*ʿalayhi as-salām*) is his guardian, and Ibrāhīm (*ʿalayhi as-salām*) is the commander in chief of his soldiers, while the state of Adam (*ʿalayhi as-salām*) will tacitly say, you are the son of my image and the father of my meaning [meaning: you are my son as your image is derived from mine, but metaphysically it is as if you were my father.]

CHAPTER THREE

Prophet Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*)

BEWARE OF SINS for they brought forth humiliation to the forefather of mankind after he had enjoyed the glory of His commanding the Angels to

أَسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ

“prostrate to Adam”

[*al-Isrā'* 17: 61],

and it is what made him leave the comfort of

أَسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ

“dwell you and your wife, in Paradise” .

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 35]

From the moment Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*) was captivated by his desire; he fell and his sorrow became long-lasting; thenceforth, those of his offspring who are rational (i.e. pious) are in grief (whenever they commit a sin) whereas those of his offspring who become captive to their desires are in a state of humiliation. Indeed, the most intense darkness is that which is preceded by light, the most deleterious kind of abandonment is that preceded by

close ties, and the most severe emotional suffering of a lover is when [his beloved] is remembered. It is indeed a surprise how humans were born unable to walk, yet afterwards they manage to walk into sins.

It is surprising how Jibra'īl ('alayhi as-salām) prostrated to mankind at the beginning but afterwards he is the one to drag them by their foreheads, while the haggard one begs him, "be gentle!"

All grief lies in the remembrance and longing of the days that have passed by and ended, when Adam ('alayhi as-salām) had been close to his Lord; the tongue of his state says, woe to me, and the heart exclaims, relieve my longing! How many distressing incidents did he post in secret that only the heart knows of the contents of which are ruefulness and conceal regret.

The aching breaths of Adam ('alayhi as-salām) started burning him when [Allāh said],

عَصَىٰ آدَمُ

"Adam disobeyed"

[*Tāhā* 21: 121]

and would have overcome him had he not been saved by the water of

فَنَابَ عَلَيْهِ

"He accepted his repentance"

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 37]

Every time he saw Angels descending from heaven [to earth where he was sent down] he was reminded of the joy of his stay in Paradise, and so his eyes would immediately start shedding tears

to lessen his grief. Seeing his earthly possessions always reminded him of what he had been granted in Paradise, and the ensuing sorrow would almost make his hope turn into despair. Thereafter, he mounted the back of hope and started his journey to the land of Minā (i.e. Makkah), and had he not been inspired with the words [of repentance] he would have perished.¹

I wonder at the worries of the son of Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*); he does not have the relief of his sorrow, the creatures of earth cannot comprehend what he utters and the Angels of heaven still have the remnants from

أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ

“will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood”

[*al-Baqarab* 2: 30]

And so he is left alone in his distress with no one to console him. Indeed, the weeping of Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*) for his exile from Paradise is incomparable to the weeping of any other. His overwhelming deep sorrow and distress was not because of losing Paradise itself, but rather because of his being distanced from the Lord of Paradise.

Wahb ibn Munabbih², may Allāh be pleased with him, related: [After Adam departed from Paradise and was sent down to earth] he prostrated for one hundred years crying on the mountain of

¹ He refers to the *ayah*, “And Adam received from his Lord words so He forgave him” *al-Baqarab* 2: 37

² Wahb ibn Munabbih from the generation of *'Tabi'in*. He was born during the caliphate time of *'Uthmān bin 'Affān* (34 A.H.) He was known of his piety and honour and was an exegete in the field of Jewish narrations and tales.

India until his tears flowed into the valley of Sarandib, causing the carnation and cinnamon to grow and caused the peacocks to migrate to the valley. Thereafter, Angel Jibra'il came down and said to him, 'raise your head for you have been forgiven.' So Adam ('alayhi as-salām) raised his head and went to circulate around the Sacred House (*Ka'bah*) for a whole week, and scarcely had he completed before he was drowning in his tears.

If the state of Adam ('alayhi as-salām) was expressed in words, it would say, O Lord, you have captured those who love You, and so I seek your Mercy, for I am a pot that is meant to break, and because of that it was handed to a shaky hand; and You have said, "If you have not sinned I would have replaced you with people who would commit sin and seek forgiveness."³ He wept for the loss of his house (Paradise) once, and a thousand times for losing the Neighbour (i.e. Allāh), for indeed departure disturbs and distance agitates.

³ Reported by Muslim #2751.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Description of the Spring Season

WHEN THE EARTH IS BEREFT of its partner (i.e. rain), it finds itself afflicted by a touch of aridity - upon which the earth clothes itself with the garments of

وَتَرَى الْأَرْضَ هَامِدَةً

“and you see the earth barren”

[*al-Hajj* 22: 5]

- until it reaches a degree of severe poverty, whence it raises its hand, begging for charity from the clouds. The High Creator afterwards waters the nether from the above; aid is called forth and rain is elicited without stimulation;

فَسَقْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ بَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ

“We drive them to a dead land”

[*Fāṭir* 35: 9]

Indeed the effect of the Creator on the drab and lifeless is a wonder. Therewith, weather garbs itself in the darkest vesture while the cavalry of rain approaches, unsheathing swords of light-

ning. A vagarious stratum of air begins spraying out its troops of breezes, disclosing to the wind the intention of rain. Therefore the clouds borrow the [tearful] eyelids of lovers, and the hands of the munificent, causing the valleys to abound with flowing rivers. Every time the palm of the breeze grazes these rivers, its necklace rubs against its silver chains, all the while the sun hides out, as the clouds spray their raindrops; all the while, the two partners; earth and rain, ratify a contract of mutual love.

As the winter sun begins to lay down on the immature land, the saplings begin to emerge; spring rushes into the lands lending the earth youthful garments to wear. Thereupon, the eyes of earth open after a year of sleeping, and the plants arise as if brides are adorned with every kind of jewelry; the narcissus appears as if it were an eye and its leaves as if they were silver; the anemone shows the color of shyness, and spice plants appear as if in a state of trepidation; the viola flower gives the appearance of bite marks on the flesh; the lily nods off and then rouses; the branches of trees intertwine and then separate; and fragrances reveal their secrets to the breeze. All aesthetic songs converge in the procession of this wedding of communion; each art surpassing all the other arts. Birds competes each other in assonance; each bird expresses its yearning in its own language; the dove chants, the bulbul sermonizes, the black-headed pigeon recites, the aquatic birds whistle; the Hoopoe sings and the tree-branches sway - all of them expressing their gratitude and thankfulness to the One in Whose Hand lies all Authority. Only then does the nose of the yearner manage to detect the scent of the object of his affections.

CHAPTER FIVE

Salmān al-Farsī (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhū*)

FOREGONE DESTINY RULED in favour of a group of people with the *ayah*,

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ
سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِنَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾

“Indeed, those for whom the best [reward] has preceded from Us - they are from it far removed”

[*Anbiyā’* 21: 101]

And ruled against another group of people with

قَالُوا
رَبَّنَا غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْنَا شِقْوَتُنَا وَكُنَّا قَوْمًا ضَالِّينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

“Our Lord, our wretchedness overcame us, and we were a people astray”

[*al-Mu’minūn* 23: 106]

How woeful it is! There is no escape! The Divine providence expressed in the first *ayah* enlightened the hearts of the Jinn there-

fore they said,

إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْآنًا عَجَبًا ﴿٧١﴾

“Indeed, we have heard an amazing Qur’ān”

[*al-Jinn* 72: 1],

while the summation of disgrace pronounced in the second *ayah*;

غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْنَا شِقْوَتُنَا

“our wretchedness overcame us”

[*al-Mu’minūn* 23: 106],

Blinded the hearts of Quraysh causing them to say [about the Qur’ān],

إِن هَذَا إِلَّا آسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

“This is not but legends of the former peoples.”

[*al-Anfāl* 8: 31]

[On the Day of Judgment] those who shall receive their books in left hand will be expelled to the distant darkness, veiled [from Allāh], while those who shall receive their records in their right hand will bask in the gusts of nearness [to their Lord]. Indeed, neither did the worship of *Shayṭān* and Bal‘ām¹ bring forth any benefit, nor the stubbornness of sorcerers bring forth any harm. A [Christian] priest accepted the Oneness of Allāh although he never saw the Messenger (ﷺ), while on the other hand, Ibn Ubayy

¹ Bal‘ām ibn Ba‘ūrā’ one of the known most knowledgeable people of Bani Israel (the Jews) who learnt the Torah directly from Mūsā. However, he eventually rebelled and went astray and authored a book promoting disbelief, therefore Allāh revealed the following *ayah* about him; “And recite to them, [O Muḥammad], the news of him to whom we gave [knowledge of] Our signs, but he detached himself from them; so Shayṭān pursued him, and he became of the deviators.” [*al-Arāf* (7):175]

disbelieved despite the fact that he prayed behind the Messenger (ﷺ). The example of the former is like the lizard [lives on waterless dry earth] but still finds sufficient water to drink and survive, whereas the example of the latter is like the fish lives in water but does not drink. The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) visited the house of a Jew who was ill, and said to him, embrace Islām and you shall be saved. The sick child looked at his father [seeking his instruction] so the father said to his son, obey Abū al-Qāsim (ﷺ).² Thereupon, the Jewish child embraced Islām, and thus he became in his house a stranger as was Salmān [al-Farsī] (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*) when he was in his house [prior to his Islām]. Nevertheless [the Prophet (ﷺ) eased the state of such foreignness with] “Salmān is from us.”³

The tongues of the opponents [i.e. the Jews] yet could not be withheld so they shouted objecting, why does Muḥammad not leave us alone? The wordless reply embodied in the Prophet’s state said [in regards the Jew child who embraced Islam], ‘How can I leave you alone when you have a sick person belonging to us still at your place! I still have work to do’. Indeed, the circumstances and events may harmonise hearts. Mūsā (*‘alayhi as-salām*) could not stand the bitterness of being a stranger at the house of pharaoh, even though the wife of pharaoh, Āsīya who was a Muslim, was a source of comfort to him during his stay, because the rights of his biological mother had precedence. So, his mouth was commanded not to accept milk from any nurse,

وَحَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَرَاضِعَ مِنْ قَبْلُ

² One of the nicknames of the Prophet (ﷺ)

³ *Al-Bidāyah wa’l-Nihāyah* by Ibn Kathīr (4/101). This narration has been authenticated by al-Suyūṭī in *al-Jāmi’ al-Ṣaḡhīr* (4696).

“and We had prevented from him [all] wet nurses before”
[*al-Qaṣaṣ* 28: 12]

Until his real mother nursed him under the lute song of reunion. The knowledge of Allāh predestined the belief of Āsiya and the Prophethood of Mūsā (*‘alayhi as-salām*), therefore the casket in which he - a child separated from his mother - was steered to the doorstep of a lonely wife who was (as if) without a husband.

As Salmān’s (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhū*) predestination secured him [his guidance], the breezes of youthfulness carried him towards religion; his father was upon the belief of the Magians but the providential evidences guided Salmān to the monastery of the Christians. He debated his father whose only response to his son’s arguments was to put him in chains; a lowly response practiced from ages - since the day of

أَنَا أَخِي وَأُمِيتُ

“I give life and cause death”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 258]

[which had been the response of Ibrāhīm’s (*‘alayhi as-salām*) adversary], and

عَلَى رُءُوسِهِمْ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا هَؤُلَاءِ يَنْطِقُونَ
ثُمَّ يَكْسُوا

“Then they reversed themselves, [saying], “You have already known that these do not speak!”

[*al-Anbiyā* 21: 65]

[the day at which the people of Ibrāhīm (*‘alayhi as-salām*) admitted the wrongness of their belief] but [despite all that, they re-

sponded with]:

حَرِّقُوهُ وَأَنْصُرُوا إِلَهَتَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

“Burn him and support your gods - if you are to act.”

[*al-Anbiya'* 21: 68]

At the commencement of his journey, Salmān (*radīy Allāhu 'anhu*) became a guest to

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ

“We shall surely test you”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 155]

because without enduring the trial patiently he would have not reached the rank of “a man who has journeyed far, is disheveled and dusty if he swears, Allāh will fulfill it for him.”⁴ When he heard of some people preparing to travel, he stealthily left his father’s wary guard, and without hesitance, joined the travelers, hoping to reach the destination he sought. He dived into the ocean of resurrection to find the core of existence; his innate self raised objection [to this plan] saying, where are you going? and he replied:

وَقَالَ إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي سَيِّدِينَ ﴿٩٩﴾

“I will go to [where I am ordered by] my Lord; He will guide me.”

[*al-Saffat* 37: 99]

With a humble demeanor, he devoted himself to serving the guides of his journey. Eventually, the time came when the (Christian) hermits realised that their era was drawing to an end, so they

⁴ Famous authentic ḥadīth documented by *al-Jāmi' al-Ulūm wal Hikam* by Ibn Rajab (1/269) and *al-Jāmi' al-Saghīr* by al-Suyūṭī (4401)

encouraged him to search for the signs which would lead him to our Prophet (ﷺ), the most noble among those held in esteem; so they said to him: His time has come, so beware of going astray [during your search for him], for he will appear in the land of the Arabs, then he will immigrate (from his hometown) to another place located between two hills. So go in search for him when you hear of his migration; if they could but see him as he crossed the open country, his yearning will be acting as his guide, his longing (to his home) will be a source of perturbation to him, and his anxiousness will keep him alert. Thereafter, Salman travelled with a company that took advantage of him so

وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ بَخْسٍ

“they sold him for a reduced price”

[*Yūsūf* 12: 20]

to a Jew living in Madīnah. But, his state of dejection due to this enslavement was eventually to be restored by the soothing effect of [the words of the Prophet (ﷺ) when he said]: “Salmān is from us”

His excitement revived when he finally found himself at the place located between the two hills, even as Madīnah remained unaware of the burning emotion of its new inhabitant. He endured [the life of slavery and waiting] until the news bearer came with the glad tidings of the arrival of the Messenger (ﷺ) [to Madīnah] whilst he was on top of a palm tree; the joyous rush of anxious feelings he experienced upon hearing this news overwhelmed him and almost made him fall off the tree, were it not for his steadfast will that kept him holding on, just like it happened on the day [when the mother of Mūsā (*‘alayhi as-salām*)],

إِنْ كَادَتْ لَتُبْدِيَ بِهِ
 وَلَوْ أَنَّ رَبَّنَا عَلَّمَهَا لَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

“she was about to disclose [the matter concerning] him
 had We not bound fast her heart that she would be of
 the believers.”

[*al-Qaṣaṣ* 28: 10]

He went down the tree in great haste to meet the Messenger
 (ﷺ) but his overwhelming excitement made him lose control over
 himself just as had happened to Ya‘qūb (*‘alayhi as-salām*) [when he
 said]:

إِنِّي لَأَجِدُ رِيحَ يُوسُفَ

“Indeed, I find the smell of Yūsuf.”

[*Yūsuf* 12: 94]

His master shouted at him, “This is not of your concern, go
 back to your work’, but how could he turn away now, when he still
 had unfinished business to attend to!? His refusal to turn away
 made his master to start hitting him while he was indulging in the
 sensation of longing and his heart singing with joy, but how the
 can deaf hear!

CHAPTER SIX

In the saying of Allāh: *"They arise from [their] beds; they supplicate their Lord in fear and hope..."*¹

THE JOURNEY OF NIGHT [i.e. praying and worshipping at night] is unbearable except by the one starving [whose hunger perks him up]. The legions of indolence assemble to clutch onto the tail of slackness, and so they embellish the beauty of sleep [in the eyes of the sleeper]; adorn the comfort of the bed [to the body], and picture the coldness of water as intimidating [to abstain the body from performing wudu]. However, as soon as a spark of strong will and endeavor is provoked, the path of worship becomes illuminated, thereupon the heart of certainty hears the call: "Is there anyone seeking anything so I that may fulfill it for him?"²

At night, the breath of the devotee rapidly quickens [due to his excessive effort in acts of worship]. There is a concealed strength

¹ *al-Sajdah* (32):16

² Reported by Muslim (758)

inside the worshippers while they beseech Allāh's forgiveness; indeed the crying of children is unlike the crying of men. Spending the night awake [worshipping] is the howdah of devotees; the breeze of the night awakes the eyes of the thoughtful. You can see them laying down the mattress of *Qais*³ [i.e. awake due to their passion] and spending their night like the nights of *al-Nābigah*⁴; if they sleep, they lay [their heads on] pillows of lofty aspiration, and when they rise, they get up worried as if sleep took an oath to stay away from their eyelids. They remain standing, their feet bearing their weight all night, until the night breeze approaches sleep, and the caller declares the death of darkness [due to nearness of dawn] so that when the brunt of darkness is borne away by the break of dawn, they rush to lean on the rides of forgiveness.

The fragrance of late nights is the nourishment of souls whereby they become softened hence enjoying the sense of tranquility, cooling down the heat of their yearning and delivering their letters of love. He whose heart is in distress finds his tranquility and comfort when feeling the breeze, despite its disturbance. Yet, understanding the uttered words of this breeze can only be understood by the one yearning [for his Lord], for conversation about lightning is only attractive to the lovers [i.e. worshippers]. They seclude themselves, with the One Whom they love, inside the house of supplications, therefore He clothes them with garments that indicate their connection to Him, and perfumes them with the scent of good treatment. Indeed, the late part of the night is too precious for words, so they receive the dawn while the signs

³ A known poet who is known of his platonic love. This metaphor indicates how their love to Allāh makes them awake all night just as how Qais used to stay awake all night remembering his beloved.

⁴ Eloquent poet

In the saying of Allāh: "They arise from [their] beds; they supplicate..."

of their nearness to Allāh are apparent on them.

The odour of their worship smells out their clothes, leaving you, O you sleeping corpse, to grieve over your loss! O you, naked and heedless, weep, for you neither know how they spent their night nor are you aware of what has happened to them. How would the one whose heart is void know what transcends the one whose heart is filled and attached to the one Whom he loves! The company of the

نَسَجَافِي جُنُوبِهِمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ

"their bodies forsake their beds"

[*al-Sajdah* (32):16]

has already departed before the arrival of the late night while the one cast away in the state of sleep is still locked in his cell of slumber. The jailor does not set the sleeper free until the worshippers reach their destination. The sleeper then gets up [hoping to catch up with them] so he starts seeking their traces in the city of Kufah⁵ while they have already commenced the state of *iḥrām* [in Makkah].

Ḥasān ibn Abī Sinān⁶ used to feign asleep, until his wife would fall asleep so that he could get up and pray. When al-Rabīʿ ibn Khaytham⁷ used to be in a state of distress, weeping and exces-

⁵ A city in 'Irāq

⁶ He is from the tabiʿīn living in the city of Baṣrah. He was known of his piety and righteousness.

⁷ He is from the tabiʿīn and known of his shyness and piety. His high rank can be noted from the statement of Ibn Masʿūd who said to him, "If the Messenger of Allāh was alive today and saw you, he will surely love you."

sive worship at night, his mother used to say to him: 'O son, have you murdered someone [because of which you are in such great distress and weeping]? He would reply: yes... I have killed myself.'

The mother of 'Umar ibn al-Munkadir⁸ used to say to him: "I wish to see you sleeping for once." He said: "O mother, whoever witnesses the night looming over his head, while fearing dying in his sleep, should ought never to be able to sleep. O mother, when night comes I become too frightened, so it passes without having performed as much worship as I would have wished to."

One of the ascetics was told: be gentle to yourself [i.e. do not exhaust yourself with excessive worship], he replied: gentleness is what I am after [i.e. seeking the comfort of the immortal life not this life]. Umayyah al-Shāmī⁹ used to cry and weep in the *masjid* until his weeping became loud. The ruler of those regions sent him a letter saying: you are disturbing those who pray with your excessive crying and loud weeping so hold yourself back a little. When he read it he cried and said: The grief of the Day of Judgment has bequeathed me endless tears. I gain some relief by shedding some of them sometimes.

⁸ He is from the third generation who lived in the Madīnah. Al-Darāqūṭnī said about him, "The most pious worshippers of Madīnah are three; Abū Bakr ibn al-Munkadar, Muḥammad ibn al-Munkadar, 'Umar ibn al-Munkadr"

⁹ One of the known pious worshippers.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Turning to Allāh (in repentance)

O YOU WHO DELAYS his repentance because of his deluded hope of a long life; [tell me]

لَا يَوْمَ أُخِّلْتُ

“For what Day was it postponed?”

[*al-Mursalāt* 77: 12]

You used to say, I will repent when my hair becomes grey [i.e. old] and here they are, the months of summer (i.e. youth) have passed and gone and if the sword of your endeavors was of any use, your vain desires would have met their death under its sharp edge. Every day you lay down the basis of your repentance and returning to Allāh but you position this foundation on the edge of a precipice, because every time you get a heartfelt feeling to repent, the troops of your desires attack and overcome your intention of repentance. Slaughter the throat of desire with the knife of firm resolve, because so long as desire remains alive, you are never safe from the relapses of an ever-changing heart [from good to evil]. Let the tears you shed in the darkness of the night be your intercessors for when you make mistakes. Indeed, the flint

of the intercessor sparks the flames of success.

With the ink of your tears write your good expectations from He Who is capable of fulfilling them; do not suffice with your repentance without accompanying it with grief and sorrow similar to the grief of Prophet Ya'qūb (*'alayhi as-salām*) [when he lost Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*)] or the patience of Prophet Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) [over what he had gone through]; but if you cannot bear either of those, then at least accompany it with the humility of the brothers of Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*), [when they said]:

وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا

“and be charitable to us.”

[Yūsuf 12: 88]

O people, these are the torches of success and acceptance; O you whose house is devoid of provision, these are the days of harvest; O you who was abandoned in [the land of] Kan'ān, when will you smell the breeze of “Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*)”; O “prison of Egypt” when will the king see the seven cows [in his dream so Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) could be free], O Benjamin, the time of departure is when you hear the tones of [the words]

إِنِّي أَنَا أَخُوكَ

“Indeed, I am your brother” ,

[Yūsuf 12: 69]

O you who constantly makes mistakes, when will you prostrate the forehead of

وَإِن كُنَّا لَخَاطِئِينَ ﴿٩١﴾

“and indeed we have been sinners”?

[Yūsuf 12: 91]

When the firm will of truthfulness and sincerity descends into the heart of the repenting slave, the King becomes pleased, and He writes off the written [bad deeds] and reveals to the earth; conceal the faults of my slave.

Before you, there was a man who took a hundred lives, but then he repented and set forth [from his evil town to another good town] but death overtook him on the way. Thereupon, Angels of mercy disputed with Angels of punishment [as each side wanted to take this man's soul]. Allāh sent to them an Angel to arbitrate between them, who said: measure the distance between the two towns, then Allāh commanded the town of evil to recede back further and the town of the good to come closer. When they measured the distances, they found the man closer to the town of the good, and thus he was forgiven.¹

Neither the judge nor the adversaries realise the wisdom of

كَذَلِكَ كَدْنَا لْيُوسُفَ

“thus we plan for Yūsuf”

[Yūsuf 12: 30]

[Allāh pledges that] if a sinner repents sincerely, He will accept him and revive him and,

كَأَنِّي آسِئْتَهُوَّةُ الشَّيْطَانِ

“made for him light by which to walk among the people.”

[al-An‘ām 6: 122]

O you who repent

أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ

¹ See Bukhārī (3470)

“fulfill [all] contracts”

[*al-Mā'idah* 5: 1]

And honour [your contract] with the One with Whom you made a contract,

وَلَا تَنْقُضُوا الْأَيْمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوْكِيدِهَا

“and do not break oaths after their confirmation.”

[*al-Nahl* 16: 91]

If you slip after having become upright, then return again to the house of Generosity [where] “Allāh shall not tire [of forgiving you] until you are tired [of seeking forgiveness]”²

² Reported by Bukhārī (5861)

CHAPTER EIGHT

Struggling against oneself

O YOU WHOSE [DESIROUS] SELF has subdued him, overpower your desires with the whip of endeavor and strong will, because when it becomes aware of your earnestness and seriousness of purpose, it will surrender to your command. And, prevent it from enjoying what it desires from the lawful things, so that it agrees to abandon the unlawful. Therefore if it endures leaving the lawful and permissible then you have the choice

فَأَمَّا مَنَابَعْدُ وَإِنَّمَا فِدَاءٌ

“either [confer] favour afterwards or ransom.”

[Muhammad 47: 4]

This worldly life and *Shayṭān* are enemies who have come out against you, and await you from outside, whereas your base self (i.e. own desires) is your inner enemy with a closer vantage point, therefore [you should know that] from the etiquettes of *Jihād* (i.e. fighting and struggling against ones inner desires) is to

فَنِلُوا الَّذِينَ يَلُونَكُمْ

“fight those adjacent to you.”

[*al-Taubah* 9: 123]

That said, when your [desirous] self inclines towards desires, lusts and whims, you should restrain it with the reins of piety, and when it neglects acts of worship and obedience, you should discipline it with the whip of self-struggle, and when it enjoys the drink of inadvertency and likes wearing the garment of indolence, you should yell at it with the voice of firm, strong resolve, and when it views itself through the eyes of arrogance you should remind it of its base origin [i.e. coming from sperm]. By Allāh, if you do not endure the bitterness of medicine in your throat you shall never be assured of even a tiny bit of good health in your body. The troops of your desires have housed themselves inside yourself, fortifying the fortress of lassitude and negligence. So charge with the soldiers of piety with the swords of strong will-power drawn out, and storm their gates!

The example of the self of mankind is like a worthless dog; when it is full it sleeps, and when it is hungry it ogles around wagging its tail. The civilised is approached politely whereas the uncouth barbarian is approached by force.

One of the righteous predecessors used to walk with a spring in his step whenever he succeeded in subduing his desires, like a marksman who feels pride upon hitting his target. Strengthen your will and your endeavor in the struggle against yourself, because in this struggle enemies always exist, even if there are no wars. The success of the struggle of our Prophet (ﷺ) reached such a high level of strength that its effect extended to reach and influence even those who showed enmity against him; thus even the [evil]

spirit (*qarīn*¹) that followed him, embraced Islām.

O Allāh direct us to [the means with which we can] subdue our evil *qarīn* for they are the closest of our enemies, and exert the most influence over our selves.

O you, stop paying attention to your [desirous] self, and steal from it what may benefit you afterward, for life is very short. Thus, complain to Allāh about the injustice that your [desirous] self causes to yourself, and seek the Creator's aid in order to achieve victory over it, for He commands you with worship and work, while you go the opposite way.

Though you rush to join the fight, but you are not actually taking a side in the battle. You would like to reach the loftiest ranks, though you have not yet taken one step upon the staircase of struggling and striving! How is that you wait for the harvest, when you have not even planted any seeds? If [Prophet] Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) had not opted for

السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ

“prison is more to my liking”

[*Yūsuf* 12: 33],

He would have not came out of it to the comfort [and enjoyed the consequences] of

وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ

“And thus We established Yūsuf in the land.”

[*Yūsuf* 12: 56]

¹ Each person has two kinds of *Qarīn*; an Angel that suggest goodness to the person, and a devil that suggests evil to the person.

Indeed, speed in travelling might come about when the journey is under the wings of the night, wealth might be attained after suffering, and a face might radiate with light after paleness.

When the believers habituated themselves to upright conduct through discipline, they effectively signed a contract with Allāh;

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ
بِأَن لَّهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ

“Indeed, Allāh has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Paradise.”

[*al-Taubah* 9: 111]

However, you should know that the [desirous] self is never pleased unless it is satisfied, because it is like a rebellious dog, therefore what should be sought is a hunting dog, not a common stray.

Woe to you, the limbs of body are like water channels reaching water to the trees, and should the water be impure it will affect the fruits. You start the day by unleashing your body’s extremities to hunt for idle pastime and distractions, and when the time of prayer commences you bleat at your limbs to answer the call, but they never respond to you because they have not been trained to do so. How far is the state of a limb from fear and humility [to the Almighty] that had never been straightened and disciplined by [the command]

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ

“Tell believers to lower their gaze and guard their private parts....”

[*al-Nūr* 24: 30]

And how far is the state of a heart from reflection, when it is not even agitated by the fear of [the fact that Allāh],

يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى

“He knows the secret and what is [even] more hidden.”

[*Ṭābā* 20: 7]

CHAPTER NINE

The dispraise of *Dunya*

YOU ARE MORE ELOQUENT in your rhetoric than Sabḥan¹ when the conversation revolves around the worldly life, whereas when the mention of the hereafter is brought up you become more incoherent than Bāqil.² You march forward to (i.e. seek possession of) the transitory and mortal with more courage than Ibn Ma'dy karib³, but as for seeking the immortal and everlasting, you show more cowardice than the cowardice of Ḥasān.⁴ Woe to you, this worldly life only impresses those with

¹ Sabḥan ibn Wail: An eloquent Arab speaker who embraced Islām during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) but has not met him at all.

² Bāqil: An eloquent Arab speaker.

³ 'Amr ibn Ma'id ibn Yakrib a known brave knight.

⁴ Ḥasān Ibn Thābit, the poet of the Prophet (ﷺ). Though he was the most influential poet which he employed to serve religion and defend the Prophet (ﷺ) yet he lacked the courage when it comes to physical fights. However, his courage showed up in his poetry made the Prophet (ﷺ) praise him. It is also important to note that though he lacked the courage it is out of good manners

no intellect, similar to how vain dreams please the sleeper; imaginary games are perceived as reality by a child, whereas a sensible person cannot be deceived by such delusion.

How often has this worldly life brought to ruins one's love for it, then disposed it in the expanse of the efforts to acquire it, and how often has this worldly life halted people from reaching the land of comfort (i.e. the hereafter). How many have made endeavors that were as determined and strong as the strength of the rook, but despite that, worldly life repelled them and reduced them to a humiliated state. O seekers of this worldly life; know that it is dispraised in all revealed divine laws. It is known that the child belongs to the mother, as the Islāmic jurists state; therefore whenever your body grows and nourishes from unlawful means, then what it earns will be like oil fuelling a fire.

'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (*radīy Allāhu 'anhū*), despite his ideality, used to say, O Hudhayfah (*radīy Allāhu 'anhū*), am I one of the hypocrites?⁵, so how is it that you feel safe despite all your sins?! If even [as eminent as] Benjamin⁶ was accused of theft, what redemption is to be expected [for someone like you]?! 'Umar was seen in a dream twelve years after his death, saying "It is just now

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and politeness as well respecting his service for the religion and defending the Prophet (ﷺ), that one never call him as such. When scholars mention it they do so just to describe a state of courage and not to defame him as may some think or do today.

⁵ The Prophet (ﷺ) informed Hudhayfah of the names of all hypocrites so 'Umar due to his extreme piety and fear of Allāh was always inquiring from him whether he was one of these names. However, Hudhayfah assured him he is not included.

⁶ The youngest brother of Prophet Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*).

that I have finished being questioned and judged; I am amazed how my judgment lasted more than the years I ruled!“ Is this not enough of a wakeup call for those as heedless as the asleep person, in their desire?

O you whose wrongdoings have stained him with its dirt, hasten to wash it off with the spring of good health before it dries up. Do not be fooled by a life as sweet as honey, for indeed being judged (on the Day of Judgment) will be more bitter than the taste of gall. O you antagonists, you shall then know the true might and status of your opponent (i.e. Allāh) as then the indebted will meet his creditor, after the respite he got from paying his debt.

The destruction of a building is caused by installing in it a misappropriated block of stone; so if the lawful is hardly free of doubt [of being blemished by something of the unlawful] so what do you expect regarding the unlawful? There was a milkman who used to sell the milk of his sheep, but he used to cheat [his customers] by mixing the milk with water, until one day a torrent came and swept away all sheep; he said, weeping at his loss, “all these drops of water that I used to mix with milk have accumulated until it became an unstoppable torrent”, while the punishment of his sin called out to him: “It is your hands that lit the fire, and your mouth the bellows [that made into a blazing inferno]”.

How many tears did the eye of the [wronged] widow shed, and how cruelly was the heart of the orphan torn, while their oppressor basked in comfort?! but

وَلْيَعْلَمَنَّ نَبَاهُ بَعْدَ حِينٍ ﴿٨٨﴾

“you will surely know [the truth of] its information

after a time.”

[*Sād* 38: 88]

I truly wonder at these oppressors, how they forget the manner in which the tyrants [before them] were folded up within the pages of history, though they had not even reached one-tenths of what these have reached! Have not they noticed how they perished and to what end they reached?

فَكُلًّا أَخَذْنَا بِذَنْبِهِ

“So each We seized for his sin” .

[*al-Ankābūt* 29 40]

Have they not departed from the orbits of regret?

فَمَا بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَاءُ وَالْأَرْضُ

“And the heaven and earth wept not for them!”

[*al-Dukhān* 44: 29]

Was not the warning call launched?

كَمْ تَرَكُوا مِنْ جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

“How much they left behind of gardens and springs.”

[*al-Dukhān* 44: 25]

Indeed, I wonder at the befooled (i.e. those who still overlook all these signs and are misled by the transient charms of this world)

وَقَدْ خَلَّتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمُ الْمَثَلُتُ

“while there has already occurred before them similar punishments [to what they demand]”

[*al-Ra'd* 13: 6]

Did not the admonishment of

وَبَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ كَيْفَ فَعَلْنَا بِهِمْ

“and it had become clear to you how We dealt with them”

[*Ibrāhīm* 14: 45]

suffice [so they return to the right path?] Who will ever help them if they then wanted to return to life?

وَحِيلَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ مَا يَشْتَهُونَ

“And prevention will be placed between them and what they desire”

[*Saba'* 34: 54]

Plenty are those who indulged in luxury, until their comforts were overturned and changed to calamities!

فَجَعَلْنَاهَا حَاصِيدًا

“and We make it as a harvest,”

[*Yūnus* 10: 24]

O oppressors, the punishment is in the prison of

فَلَا تَعْجَلْ عَلَيْهِمْ

“So be not impatient over them”

[*Maryam* 19: 84]

and hope is upheld

لِّنَّالْيَاكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةً

“so that mankind will have no argument against Allāh.”

[*al-Nisā'* 4: 165]

If the scorching [wind] of punishment had been removed from

the blowing gale of

وَلَيْنَ مَسَّتْهُمُ نَفْحَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّكَ

“And if [as much as] a whiff of the punishment of your Lord should touch them”

[*al-Anbiyā'* 21: 46]

the blocks of insobriety caused by

إِنَّمَا نُمَلِّ لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِثْمًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ

مُهِينٌ ﴿١٧٨﴾

“We only extend it for them so that they may increase in sin, and for them is a humiliating punishment.”

[*Āl-ʿImrān* 3: 178]

would have been pulled out, and so

فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَوْصِيَّةً

“they will not be able [to give] any instruction”

[*Yāsīn* 36: 50]

Be cautious and beware of being in the state of “Lest a soul should say,

أَن تَقُولَ نَفْسٌ بِحَسْرَتٍ عَلَى مَا فَرَّطْتُ فِي جَنْبِ اللَّهِ

“Oh [how great is] my regret over what I neglected in regard to Allāh”

[*al-Zumar* 39: 56]

or

أَفَنَضْرِبُ عَنْكُمُ الذِّكْرَ صَفْحًا أَن كُنتُمْ قَوْمًا

مُسْرِفِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾

فَنَادَوْا وَلَاتَ حِينَ مَنَاصٍ ﴿٣٨﴾

“and they [then] called out; but it was not a time for escape.”

[*Ṣād* 38: 3]

Are there any unspent arrows in the quiver of warnings and admonishments!

أَفَنَضْرِبُ عَنْكُمُ الذِّكْرَ صَفْحًا أَن كُنتُمْ قَوْمًا

مُتْرَفِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

“Then should We turn the message away, disregarding you, because you are a transgressing people?”

[*al-Zukhruf* 43: 5]

The ship of piety must be fully sealed and secured (i.e. have no holes or cracks) for the sea may enter through tiny nails in the ship; therefore seal these areas with the sealant of piety. But a far cry is that from your state, who have cracked it with your major sins! And you shall not come to this realisation until you descend to the same state as the people of “Nūḥ (*‘alayhi as-salām*)” when he regretfully shouted

لَا عَاصِمَ الْيَوْمَ

“There is no protector today”

[*Hūd* 11: 43]

O sinners, the grass of justice shall not thrive, as long as the thorns of injustice have not been removed, for it is not guaranteed that its effect shall not extend to the heart. Beware of drowning in the intoxicant of power because the Head of authority (i.e. Allāh) is ever vigilant of you.

Woe to you, do not scorn and underestimate the invocation of the oppressed (against you), for the sparks of his heart's fire is carried by the wind of his invocation to the ceiling of the oppressor's house; his darts hit their mark, his arrows are different, his arch is blazing, his strings are strong, and his shooting target is a clear aim. Allāh promised the oppressed, "I shall make you victorious even after a while"⁷ and that is an arrow undoubtedly meant to hit its target without mistake. All the while, you have seen examples [of the downfall of oppressors] and the days shall bring forth more experiences.

⁷ Reported by al-Tirmidhī (2526) ḥadīth *al-Qudsī*.

CHAPTER TEN

Working for the Hereafter

O MY BROTHERS, turn down this worldly life (*dunya*), for it has rejected those who were more enamored by it than you. Take heed from the lessons of those who were before you, before you become a lesson for those who will come after you. This life is intoxicating and enrapturing, and the indwelling chants of mankind's nature inherently support it, therefore the lightheadedness of those who drink from it becomes stronger, until the season of profit has passed them by. Thereafter they wake up from their unconsciousness only to prepare for punishment; the feelings of sorrow overwhelming them, though just the reality of all the good they have missed [of the hereafter] is a sufficient lash upon them, a fact that they grasp only after death.

Woe to you; death is like clouds, and grey hair is its raindrops. Whoever reaches the age of seventy would complain of pain even without reason, and so the sensible person is he who wakes up in fear, because he realises the nearness of death. O you, this life is behind you, and ahead of you is the hereafter; and to seek what is behind is a retreat and a defeat, whereas victory lies in advancing

forward with strong will. The flood of death has arrived so embark for safety onto the ships of righteousness and do not accompany the “Kan’ān”¹ of hope. Woe to you, pay heed and start benefiting yourself from your lifespan, for how long is an earthly creature to live in confusion?

Illnesses distress the bodies necessarily causing emaciation, and you appear as if you are in your grave, lying down on the bed of regret while it is, by Allāh, coarser than a rock. That said, plant (good deeds) during the spring of your life before the onset of sterility afflicts the field that is your body, and amass [good deeds] in your period of capability, setting them aside before the time of weakness and incapability arrives. Prepare your supplies before travelling so you do not suffer poverty during the journey where there is no food to consume. Beware, beware, of [being in a state where you will be among those whom Allāh said they will say on the Day of Judgment],

أَنْ تَقُولَ نَفْسٌ بِحَسْرَتِي عَلَى مَا فَرَّطْتُ فِي جَنْبِ اللَّهِ

“Lest a soul should say, “Oh [how great is] my regret over what I neglected in regard to Allāh”

[*al-Zumar* 39: 56]

The wise and determined is he who acquires his provision [of good deeds] before the time of his return [to his Lord] comes. The root of the tree of strong will and firmness is wise and has perceptive thinking, its branches are seeking the advice over problematic issues, and its fruit is taking advantage of available opportunities, and the loss of opportunity in itself is sufficient cause of

¹ The son of Prophet Nūḥ (*‘alayhi as-salām*) who drowned in the flood as he hoped to survive if he just get on the top of a mountain.

regret.

I wonder at the one who wastes his lifetime in lazy indifference, until the day the collector of souls (i.e. Angel of death) arrives, whence he says,

إِنِّي تُبْتُ الْكُنْ

“Indeed, I have repented now”

[*al-Nisā'* 4: 18]

وَأَنَّى لَهُمُ التَّنَاقُشُ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ ﴿٥٢﴾

“But how for them will be the taking [of faith] from a place far away?”

[*Saba'* 34: 52]

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Fearing Allāh, the Most High

THE FEAR OF ALLĀH'S DECREE and the wariness regarding one's end disquieted the hearts of those who know (their Lord). Then the *ayah*,

وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ

“And know that Allāh intervenes between a man and his heart”

[*al-Anfāl* 8: 24]

furthered their anxiety. There is no comfort for them in this life, as whenever they enter a path of comfort their anxiety brings them out of it to the road of fear (of Allāh). Their state is as the poet said:

Anxiety flicks my heart day and night
Though my appearance gives the impression that I am well

They were ignorant naive youth, but once they awakened they spend the day and night translating their solid strong wills into actions, therefore when they paid the due debt of their mistakes

their knowledge asserted they should beware of the expected reply [in response to their previous sins]. They longed [to Allāh] so they sighed, and became anxious and thenceforth never felt at ease. Their breaths cannot be concealed, their souls are on the verge of perish; the colour of devotees is overwhelming, and their sorrowful tears betray their state - for indeed a wheel cannot roll without rumbling.

The mountain of hope crashed into the mountain of fear in the heart of the knower (of his Lord), but upon the arrival of *al-Isqandar*¹ of his thought, he called for the iron sheets of worry until

إِذَا سَاوَى بَيْنَ الصَّدَفَيْنِ

“when he had leveled [them] between the two mountain walls”

[*al-Kahf* 18: 96],

then he commanded the soldiers of intellect and reasoning to

أَنْفُخُوا

“blow”

[*al-Kahf* 18: 96],

upon which the anxious devotee invoked his lord for help as his concerns had piled up.

The devotee shall find no comfort in this life; if he feels he is veiled [from his Lord] he weeps for being distanced from his Lord, and if the gate of acceptance is opened for him, he fears being

¹ He is *Dhul Qarnayn* whose story is mentioned in *Surah al-Kahf*. See verses (83-99).

expelled. The state of such a person is like the poet said:

If his beloved goes far he cries longing to them,
and if his beloved are near he cries fearing being set apart.

Indeed, he who has never tasted it shall never realise its meaning; as one poet said:

He whose heart never been in love shall never understand
how the hearts ache [for the ones they yearn for].

Departure is darker than night, and the anxiety of the heart
is hotter than a burning ember.

One time, the fear of Ibrāhīm ibn Adham² reached its peak, causing him to shout out: O Allāh, if you have granted any of those who love you that which would ease their hearts before meeting You, then I beg you to grant me that, for distress has harmed me. Later, he saw in his dream [as if it were] Allāh, the Exalted, Saying to him: O Ibrāhīm are you not ashamed of yourself? You ask Me to give you what would put your heart at ease, even though you know well that the longing heart cannot be at ease until it meets the one it loves.

² The exemplary Imām, the knower and the master of ascetics, Abū Ishāq al-'Ajli al-Khurāsānī al-Bakhlī, the resident of Syria. He used to speak very little and spend his time in worshipping. Abu Nu'aym said: 'I heard Sufyān say: 'Ibrāhīm ibn Adham resembled Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl. Had he been a Sahābi he would have surely been a virtuous man.' His biography can be found in *Hilyatu'l-Anliyā'* (7/367-8/58), *Tabaqāt al-Anliyā'* (5/15), *Siyar al-A'lām al-Nubulā'* (7/387), Ibn Athir's *al-Kamil* (6/56), *al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah* (10/135-145) and *Sbatbarāt al-Thabab* (1/255-256).

CHAPTER TWELVE

*Dhul Bijadayn*¹

O ALLĀH, ILLUMINATE THE DARKNESS of our life with the light of Your Guidance, and make us spend our days seeking You, for those whom You accept are saved whereas those whom you turn away from are ruined.

O my brothers, if divine decree destines happiness for a person he will be guided and directed to its indicators prior to even seeking it,

وَلَقَدْ أَحْزَنَّا نَحْنُ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

“And We certainly chose them by knowledge over [all] the worlds”

[*al-Dukhān* 44: 32]

¹ Abdullāh ibn ‘Abd Nahm; he died during the lifetime of the Prophet (ﷺ) and was buried at night at the time of the battle of Tabūk. He was known as *Dhul Bijadayn* because when he embraced Islām, disbelievers removed all his clothes and took away all his wealth so his mother managed to get him a rough garment made of two pieces which is known as *Bijadayn* so he used them to cover his body.

Dhul Bijadayn was orphaned early in his childhood, seeing how he was being overcome by waves of poverty from every direction, his uncle committed himself to supporting him. After a while, his heart inclined towards following the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ), therefore he prepared himself to advance to meet the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ), but the vestiges of an illness he had suffered from, stood as a barrier and so he could not pursue his goal at that time. And that moment, the tongue of procrastination addressed his soul saying, hold back until you become bit older. When he recovered, the ink of his longing heart had very nearly run out [i.e. he could not bear the separation any longer], so he said: 'O Uncle, I was waiting for you to embrace Islām so that I would be sure your safety, but I highly doubt that you will ever do so. Therewith, his uncle responded, "I shall deprive you of all that which I granted you!" But the tongue of his strong will shouted: "To look at Muḥammad (ﷺ) for once is dearer to me than this worldly life and everything therein." This path is indeed the path of the ardent devotees as is agreed upon by everyone. This high degree of passion is exemplified by what a poet once said:

If Qais (the lover of Layla) was offered this life
and what is therein, he would have said,
To have dust from her land is more beloved to me,
for my heart is cured upon seeing her

His uncle carried out his threat, and so he deprived him from everything, even the clothes on his back, so his mother gave him a piece of one of her garments, so he split it into two parts; one part he wrapped his waist to cover his lower half, and with the remaining part he covered his upper body, then he proceeded onwards in his journey, epitomising the portrayal of "There may be a disheveled, dusty person who, if he swears an oath by Allāh,

Allāh will fulfill it.”²

Meanwhile the horn of *Jihād* had blown, calling the army of *al-Usrā*³ to advance to the battlefield, so he eagerly followed the traces of his beloved, mounting the back of his strong determination mixed with the anxiety, for the lover is oblivious of the hardships of a long arduous journey; his eye can only discern his final destination (i.e. meeting the Prophet (ﷺ)). But the Angel of death descended to earth sealing his life with a divine seal connoting ‘Verily, the yearning of the virtuous who seek Me (i.e. Allāh) has become unbearable.’ The Messenger (ﷺ) stepped down into his grave, leveling its floor for him to be laid upon, for it had been divinely ordained to him, that if you find someone seeking Me then be at his service. He then called to Abū Bakr and ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhuma*) to bring down their brother, and he signified his rank in words he uttered: O Allāh I am pleased with him so be pleased with him. This testimony made Ibn Mas‘ūd (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhū*) say: How I wish I were the person in that grave [so that I would deserve that statement].

² See Ibn Rajab, *al-Jāmi‘ al-Ulūm wal Hikam* (1/269) and al-Suyutī, *al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaghīr*, (4401).

³ The Muslim army fought the battle of Tabūk.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Unmindfulness of the Hereafter

O YOU, THE LOVE OF THIS WORLDLY life is more lethal than poison, and the evils of this world are more numerous in number than ants. But despite that, the eye of your assiduousness in obtaining it is sharper than the eyes of the hoopoe, the belly of your hope is thirstier [to this worldly life] than sand is for water, the mouth of your gluttony when it comes to life is more rapacious than that of camels. Whenever you engage in discourse about it, you are more eloquent than *Sahbān*¹; whenever you scrutinise coins for counterfeit, you are more proficient than *Daghfal*.² The strategies you deploy to fulfill your desires are finer than hair, you are more organised than the honey bees when it comes to managing it, and you go through it for its most precious possessions, just like how ants collect the smallest particles.

O you whose idiocy matches that of the silkworm, truly I won-

¹ *Sahbān ibn Wail*: Known eloquent speaker.

² *Daghfal ibn Handhalah*: Known lineage expert.

der at you! Have you not benefited at all from the blessing of intellect and reasoning? Your diligence for this worldly life after growing old is hotter than an ember! Is there any more time to live, O you who are colder in your insensate numbness than ice! Despite all this, the worldly life is dearer to your heart than your own soul is, even though after you die you shall become more insignificant than even the ground below your feet.

When you are involved in evil you are faster than a speedy stallion but when it is concerning good and charitable deeds, you are slower than a cripple. Your sins are more inglorious than the sun, while your repentance is more concealed than *al-Sabā*.³ Paying alms is heavier on you than the mountain of *Uḥud*⁴, and praying is as heavy as a boulder laid on your chest. The road to the Masjid in the scale of your laziness is as the two *farsakh*⁵ distance of *Dair Ka'b*.⁶ And although when talking about worldly affairs your chest is more expansive than the sea, when the time of worship comes, it becomes tighter than the knot of ninety.⁷

O you whose sleep is heavier than that of a leopard when it comes to your deliverance (from punishment), you have wasted time more precious than jewels. If you catch sight of a sin you

³ Name of a small dim star.

⁴ A huge mountain located in the outskirts of Madīnah.

⁵ An obsolete unit of distance of variable length (usually three miles).

⁶ Arabic saying refers to the distance needed to pass the town of *Dair Ka'b* which was known as too difficult road.

⁷ Arabs used to make symbols by using the fingers of the hand to refer to numbers. The number ninety was given the shape resulting from the circle made by having the index touching the bottom of the thumb.

leap upon it like a tiger, but if you catch a glimpse of a good deed you dodge and evade it like a fox. When you interact with people you are as treacherous as a wolf. While committing injustice you boldly step forward like a lion, and you seize a trust, just like a buzzard snatches his prey.

O you whose oppression is greater than al-Jalandī⁸, even the deer of *al-Ḥarām*⁹ would never trust you. O you who is obsessive in his love for the worldly life, an exegetic of Kufah¹⁰ when it comes to achieving it, and an ascetic of Basrah¹¹ when it comes to seeking the hereafter. I wonder at a heart that is weaker than a fly yet more rigid than a rock. It is a heart that finds the poetry of Qais¹² unimpressive, the exhortations of al-Ḥasan¹³ unmoving,

⁸ A known Umanī saying refers to the king who used to seize every good ship. This king is mentioned in Qurʾān in the *Surah al-Kahf* in the story of Mūsā and the pious slave of Allāh.

⁹ Sacred place in Makkah.

¹⁰ This is used because scholars of Kufah were known of their scholarship in the field of *Fiqh*.

¹¹ This is used because people of Basrah are known of their asceticism.

¹² Qais alias the madman of Layla; a famous eloquent poet who had platonic love with Layla.

¹³ Al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-Ḥasan Yasar al-Baṣrī Abū Saʿīd, the freed slave of Zayd ibn Thābit, the example of ascetic scholars and one of the great characters of the Tabiʿīn. He died in 110 AH. Ayyūb al-Sakhtīyānī said: "Had you seen him you would have said that you have never sat with a scholar of jurisprudence." Abu Jaʿfar al-Bāqir said: 'That is the person whose speech resembles that of the Prophets.' Refer to his biography: Ibn Saʿd: *al-Tabaqāt*, 7/156, *Ḥiṣṣat al-Awliyāʾ*, 2/131, Aḥmad: *al-Zuhd*, 2/225, *Siyar al-Aʿlām al-Nubulāʾ*, 4/563, *Tatbīkāt al-Ḥuffāẓ*, 1/66. Ibn al-Jawzī has dedicated a book for the life and virtues of this Imam which is printed and available.

and the poems of coquetry of Jarir¹⁴ unprovoking. Were it that a person with such a heart would at least have his dream of hope [to live long] interpreted by Ibn Sīrīn,¹⁵ to wake him up to live reality; for indeed the lock of such heart is of Roman manufacture and thus too difficult to break.

¹⁴ Jarīr, a famous poet.

¹⁵ Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, the Imām and Shaikh al-Islām, Abū Bakr al-Anṣārī al-Anasī al-Baṣrī, the freed slave of Anas ibn Mālīk, the companion and servant of Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ). He died in 110 A.H. Abū 'Uwana said: 'I saw Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn in the marketplace, and nobody saw him without him mentioning Allāh.' For his biography, refer to: Ibn Sa'd: *al-Tabaqāt*, 7/193, *Ḥilyatu'l-Awliyā'*, 2/263, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 5/331, *Tathkirat al-Huffāẓ*, 1/73, *Siyar al-A'lam al-Nubulā'*, 4/606, *al-Tbar*, 1/135, *Mir'āt al-Janān*, 1/232, *al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah*, 9/267, *Shatharāt al-Thabab*, 1/138.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Healing the Soul

THE MIND (i.e. sanity and intellect) is the associate of the heart, and the inherent nature is the fellow of the desires of the self, therefore do not forge a close alliance near your desires for indeed what stands close to you will drag you along with it. The surrounding walls of the heart are built upon the pillars of the mind (intellect and reasoning) whereas the tent of the self is installed on the strings of desires. Dilute the effect of your inborn nature's intoxication by mixing it with the water of self-discipline; strengthen the potency of your mental faculties (intellect and reasoning) with the mountains of piety. Indeed, the fluid of your inherent nature is salty whereas the fluid of the divine law is sweet but trials have conflated both together. The illumination of the faculties (intellect and reasoning) lights the darkness of the innate nature, upon which the right path becomes clear to the traveler, because when the tinder of thoughts is kindled, it sights the consequences of catastrophes.

The intelligence of Prophet Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) led him to

comprehend the consequences [of evil actions], whereas Zalīkha's¹ innate nature only picked out the immediate outcome. Endurance is heroic, and patience is a characteristic of true men. The sensibility of Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) restrained him from evil, whereas Zalīkha's instinctive nature is what made her drift into it. Yet note that I am not advising you to uproot the tree of your desires - and in fact, it is not possible to do so - because Allāh, Most High, has said,

زَيْنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ

“The love of desires have been beautified for people”

[*Al-Imrān* 3: 14]

Rather, I advise you to persist in the struggle of your corporeal self so that whenever branches of your desires grow high, prune them. And whenever your pruning instrument becomes worn out and blunt, sharpen it again. Be content with settling in the paddock of humility [of your lord], because a prisoner² should be busy with “Paradise”, so leave off [satisfying vain desires] despite your desire.

O my brothers, whoever brings forth an account corrupted by betrayal is surely ashamed of reviewing the constitution (Qur'ān). And whosever's garments have been stained with sins shall be distant from those close to Allāh. And whosever's reputation has been tarnished by sins, will be humiliated in the midst of the honoured ones, and whoever mounts negligence shall surely dismount

¹ The wife of the king of Egypt who tried seducing Prophet Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) but never succeeded. See *Surah Yūsuf* for full story.

² This is used in reference to the ḥadīth, “this worldly life is the prison of believers.”

in the land of regret.

Prophet Dāwūd (*‘alayhi as-salām*) was bestowed such a beautiful and resonant voice that even running water would stop upon hearing it, and birds would stand before him (in humility) like prisoners. Yet, despite of it, when the affliction of,

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ

“do not follow what you have no knowledge of”

[*al-Isrāʾ* 17: 36]

tore off the shield of

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوْا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ

“...tell the believing men to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts”,

[*Nūr* 24: 30]

His eyes stretched their sight out [to where they should not be] and so they tore apart his shirt of irreproachability such as the one Yūsuf (*‘alayhi as-salām*) had worn [when he refused the ‘Azīz’s wife’s advances], and so his error even distorted the beauty of his recitation. Ma‘mar al-Wiṣāl used to look after his vocal instrument but when he inclined toward sins he abandoned looking after what he had maintained, and so the house of purity came apart, and the rewards of the soldiers stopped and so the soldiers deserted. Indeed, that is a wound whose ointment is rare to find!

When Prophet Dāwūd (*‘alayhi as-salām*) wanted to mourn, his servants would call out: Whoever wishes to hear the mourns of Dāwūd (*‘alayhi as-salām*), let him gather here, and so all the mourners would gather at the place of mourning, and the sorrowful emotions would increase.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Iḥblāṣ (Sincerity)

SINCERITY IS AS IF A SAFEGUARDED musk preserved in the depths of the heart, its scent adorning and distinguishing the one who wears it. If deeds are the image then sincerity is the soul. Do not trouble yourself by performing a deed if you lack sincerity - a person is not considered a pilgrim unless he witnesses the gathering (on the mountain of 'Arafah) even if he performs all the other pillars of pilgrimage. Do not be misled by the mere outward appearance of good deeds - when sincerity is absent and the case is presented before the Judge, He will detain the act and it shall not be acceptance.

Sincerity is a trade that is promising and rewarding - never shall it suffer from recession. The sincere one takes stock of his good deeds, despising his work as being inadequate even though the pen of acceptance has recorded them down. Indeed, the sincere one involved in a truthful deed always assures his anonymity, as that tilts the judgment of his deeds in his favour.

When the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) depicted the beauty of ano-

nymity represented in the jewel of Uwais¹, the pickaxe of longing to meet him began to pick at the heart of 'Umar and so he sought him every year, inquiring about the people of Yemen.² When 'Umar met him for the first time he asked him: who are you? He replied, a shepherd and a hired person, without revealing his name. This is because the *awliyā'* are known only to a few as they conceal themselves underneath the garment of anonymity. However, as soon as you recognise them through their characteristics, you shall observe the purity of their secrets and not the smudges on their clothes;

وَأَصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ
يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ، وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ

“And keep yourself patient [by being] with those who call upon their Lord in the morning and the evening, seeking His countenance. And let not your eyes pass beyond them”

[*al-Kahf* 18: 28]

Ayyūb al-Sakhstīyānī³ had a little wealth, that was barely sufficient and served to distract others from seeing his [true state of] poverty; whenever he spoke, his heart would become mellow and

¹ Uwais al-Qarnī: Ibn 'Āmir, the famous ascetic. He lived during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) but did not get to see him. He was trustworthy and precise and died in the year 37H.

² This refers to the narration in which 'Umar inquired further about Uwais and so the Prophet gave him some signs through which he can locate him. And so, 'Umar started seeking these signs and hints until he managed to meet with him.

³ He is from amongst the young Tabi'īn who was known of his piety, knowledge and righteousness.

his eyes would flush with tears immediately, but then he would say, How severe is this flu that I'm suffering from!

And whenever Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham used to feel ill he would place besides himself a meal, that only a healthy person could eat, so that he would not be like one who complains about what they are having to endure. Indeed, their imitation coins are better than your genuine ones.

Sincerity of believers comes in different forms and states; some believers would give charity with their right hand while concealing it from their left hand.

Al-Nakh'ī⁴ used to recite the Qur'ān but whenever someone entered upon him he would immediately cover it [so no one would know of his good deed].

Ibn Abī Layla⁵ used to pretend to be asleep if someone entered upon him while praying.

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī once said: 'Men [before] used to forbear shedding their tears whenever their tears began to well up [from their fear of Allāh], and if they feared they would be unable to conceal their tears from being noticed by others, they would leave the place so that no one could see them.'

The bottle of the musk of love has been drizzled and its scent

⁴ He is either Ibrāhīm or his brother al-Aswad al-Nakh'ī whose piety, worship and scholarship were wide known.

⁵ Muḥammad ibn 'Abdul-Raḥmān Ibn Abī Layla al-Anṣārī, the Judge and jurist of Kufah.

has diffused into the sanctuary of worshippers; nevertheless its odour does not attach to every garment; because “How many are those who spent the night praying but earn nothing out of all that except the exhaustion of staying awake all night.” Pretenders spare no effort in praying all night but the wind of his pretence ruffles and removes the leaves of his worship leaving behind the branches of his deeds bare; indeed thistles brings forth no scent to be carried with the breeze! “If they were truthful with Allāh, that would have been better for them”

When the hypocrite attempts to simulate the deeds of the sincere, hearts recognise the stench of the corpse of his hypocrisy and so all his deeds become in vain.

I wonder at people of hypocrisy! Who do they try to fool and deceive? When

وَرَبُّكَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ

“your Lord knows what they conceal in their hearts”

[*al-Qaṣaṣ* 28: 69]

As the sincere is overwhelmed by tranquility, the dissimulative arrives showing off with the good deeds he performed but it will be said to him, hold on, the Judge is All-Seeing; when the silkworm began weaving its house, the spider came along to imitate his act [however his web is nowhere as good as the silkworm’s). The state of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb declared that when tears fall on cheeks, it becomes clear who is weeping and who was merely pretending.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Turning Towards Allāh, the Most High

O YOU WHOM DESTINY HAS chosen, know your status, for He [Allāh] Created the Universe for your sake. Turn towards your Lord, for He is approaching you. Seek Him through the guidepost of

رَبِّي كُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا

“My Lord encompasses all things in knowledge.”

[*al-An‘ām* 6: 80]

As one poet said:

He lives and occupies the heart,
I never forgot Him so I remember Him
He is beyond my eyes and hearing abilities,
but the eyes of my heart sees Him

The vow of

أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا

“Am I not your Lord? They said, Yes we have testified
[that You are our Lord]”

[*al-A'rāf* 7: 172]

Is established between you and your Lord and its tree is watered with "Is there any supplicant so that I may answer his prayer."¹ He deposited your affirmation in the black stone and commanded you to perform pilgrimage to remind you of your vow so that you do not break it.

The black stone² is indeed a chest containing undisclosed vows, and only perform what it is assigned for (i.e. recording what vowers deposit within it, protecting and concealing their vows). Thus, reach forward to touch the black stone with your hand and affirm that your oath was not taken under duress against your will; because if you have forgotten Him, surely He did not forget about you.

O you who tainted the vow of

بَلَّيْ شَهْدَانَا

"Yes we have testified [that You are our Lord]"

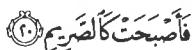
[*al-A'rāf* 7: 172]

with what is not part of it, purify yourself from the stains of mistakes, for he whose purity is debased is required to purify himself; for He created you pure and engulfed you with some of His light; thereafter the branches of your affirmation to Him sprang up, while the pigeons of acquaintance [with your Lord] became quiet, and the fruit of your allegiance [to Him] bloomed on these branches. However, when such purity is dirtied by sins, the de-

¹ Reported by Muslim (758)

² The black stone which is part of the corner of the *Ka'bah* in Makkah

mesne of your relation [with your Lord] will suffer drought, causing the branches of love to bend down, and the green field of kind treatment [that you used to receive from your Lord] to dry out, and an envoy [from Allāh] of gatherers will rove in the garden of strong resolve [to pluck it of its fruits]



“And it became as though reaped”

[*al-Qalam* 68: 20]

So lower now your shamed head in humiliation [i.e. disconnected from Allāh] and send the messenger of regret to deliver your grieving in the hope that your heart may weep over the impoverished emptiness and the desolate state of your existence. [Show humility] so that water runs into the inner seed of your soul, in order to revive the branches during the spring of remedy [that you have been given as a second opportunity] because the flora of repentance shall not be irrigated until you water it with the tears of your eyes.

O you, the sins you commit shall never effect your Lord; He only wants to keep you from [your own] harm. You should know that your obedience to Him shall never fetch Him any benefit; your obedience is for your own benefit; so contemplate on your situation.

O people, Allāh’s protectiveness and possessiveness of you is the reason for which He forbids you from filthy acts. How many times has He invited you [to His right path] but nonetheless you insisted on staying away from Him; therefore you neither managed to keep your vow, nor agreed to be rectified.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Taking Advantage of Life

MY BROTHERS, he who observes the vagaries and vicissitudes of time will take heed; for indeed what happen to others serve as lessons for us. The cradle of the child connotes the reality of the grave. The gust of the end of life breaks apart the clouds of hope [to live long]; if youth be the fruit of life then old age is the garment of doom. If the days of youth could be purchased we would have spent the most precious [of wealth] for their sake. Upon the onset of gray hair the star of the self's desires declines, and when a person knocks the door to his forties, then he is in reality asking permission to enter the house of the ruins. And he who reaches his sixties exhibits self-denial, and he who reaches the age of seventy will start receiving emissaries of his [approaching] death.

O you whose youth has been wrapped up and put aside, whose castle is torn apart, whose sailing ship has reached the shore [of its destination], it is the time for you to stand on the hill of farewell. You have only a few more moments to enjoy before your grey hair cuts off the necklace of life, so pick up the falling beads and give up on foolish hopes, for it is time to work hard to mend

some of these falling beads. Your life melts away like snow melts, and your laziness and indifference is even colder than ice.

You wish to stay but it is not in your hands; for indeed the wish of the rider may differ from the wish of his ride; indeed if the rider were to dismount, his animal would fall asleep. A sensible and wise person is he who prepares for contingencies, so how could a person neglect what is known to happen with certainty! The time of irresoluteness is brief, so there should be no hesitation or postponement. I wonder at a person whose life may be in risk of destitution even if he had surplus possession, so how would it be if furthermore he was an idle layabout?! I wonder at a person who publicises his lost possessions [in case somebody finds them] while he himself is lost, and I wonder at a person who is frugal in spending his wealth [fearing wastage], although his whole life he has wasted.

Thallāj's (literally, the ice seller) only source of income was selling ice, and (someday) he had not sold all his ice, so he started calling out [as he peddled his ware]: have mercy on a person whose capital is melting away!

Your poverty in terms of good deeds is due your laziness, because whenever a poor person is indolent he shall never become rich. If you ever had a distaste for slackness, you would have not have accepted humiliation. You have traded night prayers for an extra mouthful of food, and you have drunk from the cup of drowsiness, due to which you missed the company of those who

تَجَافَى جُنُوبَهُمْ عَنِ الْمَصَاجِعِ
يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

“arise from [their] beds; they supplicate their Lord in fear and aspiration, and from what We have provided them, they spend.”

[*al-Sajdah* 32: 16]

You have filled your belly with food, then as if the creditor of the bed came to collect from you his debt of sleep, so he put a veil over your ears until you slept as deeply as (but not for the end as) the seven sleepers. However, as you have been intoxicated by the wine of sleepiness you drank, the watcher caught you and punished you by preventing you from night prayers. And soon thereafter the story of the night you spent ended with the onset of Fajr, and you were among

رَضُوا بِأَن يَكُونُوا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ وَطُبِعَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ

“They were satisfied to be with those who stay behind, and their hearts were sealed over, so they do not understand.”

[*al-Taubah* 9: 87]

By Allāh, if you sold one moment of solitary worship of Allāh for the entire lifespan of Nūḥ (*‘alayhi as-salām*) with the wealth of Qārūn¹, you would have lost in the bargain. No, in reality, even if you got everything in the heavens in return for that moment, it would not be a profitable sale. And those who have experienced this can attest to its truth.

¹ He is from the Bani Israel whose wealth was tremendous and he opposed Prophet Mūsā (*‘alayhi as-salām*) and hence Allāh punished him by commanding the earth to swallow him and all his wealth.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Deeds of Angels

ALLĀH CREATED ANGELS from a light with no darkness in it, and the Devils from a darkness without light in it, and constituted humans from the two opposites, light and darkness. The darkness of human desires is accompanied by the light of intellect, and between the two is a delicate barrier. This barrier cannot be discerned except by striving, much as the line separating sunlight and shadow can only be discerned by an architect. Angels extol Allāh because of their purity, whereas Devils disobey Allāh because of their impureness, therefore it is indeed a source of astonishing event when piety comes from one whose nature is made of the two opposites - good and evil.

Humans comprise of intellect and desires, and the barrier of divine providence separates the path of guidance from the following of vain desires; because without the aid of the Merciful, the structure of self-discipline would crumble down and human nature would be unable to resist being slave to their desires; had it not been for the [mercy brought forth of the *ayah*]

لَهُدًى يَنْوَم

“we will surely guide them”

[*al-Ankabūt* 29: 69]

that came as a consequence of Mercy predestinated for them,

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِنَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ

“Indeed, those for whom the best [reward] has preceded from Us”

[*al-Anbiyā'* 21: 101]

O warrior, maintain your forbearance, and fear not the ambush of

وَأَسْتَفْزِرْ مِنْ أَسْطَعَتْ

مِنْهُمْ بِصَوْتِكَ وَأَجْلِبْ عَلَيْهِم بِخَيْلِكَ وَرَجِلِكَ وَشَارِكُهُمْ
فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ وَعِدْهُمْ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَّا

غُرُورًا ﴿٦١﴾

“And excite any of them whom you can with your voice, and urge your horse and foot against them, and be a partner in their wealth and children, and promise them. Shayṭān promises them only to deceive”

[*al-Isrā'* 17: 64]

so long as you are supported by the aid of

يُثَبِّتُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ
الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ

“Allāh confirms those who believe by a firm saying in the life of the world and in the Hereafter”.

[*Ibrāhīm* 14: 27]

As the tempest of the divine obligations blew upon humans, neither Harūt nor Marūt¹ could hold together and so they were punished as the people of 'Ād² had been punished, therefore the Angels who had inquired

أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ

“will You place therein one who will do harm therein
and will shed blood”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 30]

came to agree thenceforth that courageous men have been created specifically for this war. And so, after the incident of Harūt and Marūt, Angels who used to invoke Allāh against sinners started to pray for the people of earth [i.e. Only then did they realise the hardship of being obedient whilst having a desirous nature]. Similar to how Prophet Dāwūd (*'alayhi as-salām*) used to invoke his Lord not to forgive sinners, until he erred and then came to the realisation [that sinning is an innate characteristic of humans].

When the sea of faithfulness and trust³ began to surge, Angels stopped short on the shore, while the strong will and determination of man provoked him to embark on the road of danger (disregarding the consequences) because a devotee overlooks the consequences of his actions, and the intoxication caused by longing leads to courage.

¹ The two Angels whose story is mentioned in *Surah al-Baqarah* (See *ayah* 102)

² The people of Prophet Hūd (*'alayhi as-salām*).

³ See “Indeed, We offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant.” [*al-Aḥzāb* 33: 72]

It is a farfetched comparison to liken the struggle and worship of humans [to pleasing their lord] to the worship of Angels! For indeed, the situation of humans is much more astonishing in comparison to Angels, because the exaltation of Angels is inherently a part of their nature [i.e. according to which they have been created], and their worship does not involve any kind of struggle, hardship or fatigue; their roses are free of the thorns of love and desire [unlike humans]. Their predominant characteristic in this regard may be likened to the feminine trait of seeking safety, which is different from the case of humans whose characteristics in this regard are masculine, thus are virile [i.e. inclined towards enduring struggle and hardships]. The beads of their [i.e. Angels] exaltation and extolling have been naturally strung together without any difficulty, the fruit of their trees grow without enduring trouble, and are irrigated by the waters of infallibility, and all the while they

وَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

“ask forgiveness for those who believe.”

[*Ghāfir* 40: 7]

The Angels presumed that the power of infallibility was superior than the praise and exaltation of mankind to the Lord, yet they forgot that the desiccation of trees during winter is what makes them blossom and flower in the spring.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Strong Will and the Determination of Men

STRONG WILL IN THE HEART of its bearers is like a burning fire enticing the body indefatigably.

As I am overwhelmed with my yearning I prepare myself to endure hardships. For great endeavors, there are men who are of a different cut than you, and who pledged to sacrifice themselves for the sake of Allāh, and because of this, they are the ones that truly live. When they encounter horrors upon which the courage of cowards break, they have the urge to repeat it all over again, for their hearts are more firm in the battlefields of *Jihād*, than a star in its orbit. Their eyes never close when night arrives and you never have to wait for them to wake up prior to dawn, and why not, because his thirst has yet not been quenched.

All Companions immigrated [from Makkah to Madīnah] in secret except ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*) who went out in broad daylight, and not only that, he even challenged the disbelievers saying to them, ‘I am immigrating, therefore whoever wish

to stop me let him meet me down the valley.' "How I wish there were amongst you men who had sworn to spill my blood." Since the day he divorced himself from his desires he cast away the adornment of this life from his household; his house was like that of a poor Muslim person, even though he was the Chief of the Believers (*Khalifah*).

He, may Allāh be pleased with him, used to say: 'If I live long enough I will meet the needs of all the widows of Iraq so that they will need no one after me.'

When 'Umar ibn 'Abd 'Al-Azīz¹ became the ruler he heard the sounds of crying in his house, so he inquired about the reason for which they were crying, it was said to him: 'these are the finest women and handmaidens, so he said: 'whoever wishes to leave, let her leave, for I have been assigned a matter that will keep me busy from you.'

I wonder at that! Where is strong will of men in comparison to all that? Indeed, incapacity is the partner of forbiddance, and opting for laxity bequeaths its owner nothing but exhaustion.

Wash the face of earnestness from the dust of indolence, spend your wealth in good deeds, because if you are among the people of strong will and determination then know that the words "maybe" and "perchance" are not to be found in their vocabulary.

¹ He is the pious ruler whose righteousness, justice and asceticism entitled him to be considered the fifth rightly guided caliph. He is also from the lineage of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (*radīy Allāhu 'anhu*).

CHAPTER TWENTY

Darkness and Bewilderment

O YOU WHO IS WANDERING in the darkness of his oppression, who is stumbling forward to his destruction, who is searching for the knife of his death, digging the hole of his own downfall and deepening the chasm towards his own doom, how miserable is the path you have chosen to the one most beloved to your heart [i.e. yourself].

Woe to you! Seek the truth, because while you are in the shades of your wishful hope, you will only see what you love while turning a blind eye towards hardships. If your lifespan is receding and death is approaching, then it is not long before both of them converge; how can you remain in the state you are while time constantly brings you closer to his end? How can this worldly life allure a person who does not, for an instant, feel safe from death, and hence never experiences happiness even for a day? How has the knock of exhortation been heard and yet none have listened to it; indeed this is meant

لِيُنذِرَ مَنْ كَانَ حَيًّا

“To warn whoever is alive.”

[*Yāsīn* 36: 70]

The rooster of awakening calls out during the last part of the night of morals but you did not wake up, so be alert when the raucous call of the crew of departure is enticed.

O you who prefers the ephemeral over the everlasting, this [preference] is indeed the suggestion of your base nature; better would it be for your sake to consult your intellect, in order to hear the best advice! This is because whoever takes the owl to be his guide, surely his final destination will be a place of ruin.

Woe to you! The lust and desires of this worldly life are nothing but fleeting dreams seen during the slumber of heedlessness, and the sight of the ignorant neither penetrates the wall of his desires nor pierces through the barrier of inadvertency; only he who sights what is beyond the barrier can be regarded as being sagacious. When desires appear before the eyes of the innate nature, only those,

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ

“Who believe in the unseen.”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 3]

Turn their eyes away from it; most people have plummeted into the hole of deprivation while others were,

أُولَئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ

“Those are upon [right] guidance from their Lord.”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 5]

The pious have already departed proceeding towards their final destination while others still remain afflicted by a state of negli-

gence because though they are conscious of the high status of the sought

وَلَكِنْ بَعُدَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الشُّقَّةُ

“but the distance seemed too far for them.”

[*al-Taubah* 9: 42];

What a pity! If they were to truly know whom they had detached themselves from, they would prefer to be torn apart [instead]. They wake up to fraternise with the rulers, and when they go to sleep it is on a bed of sins, and recklessly do they spend their merchandise of days [time] for indeed

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ

“These are they who purchase error at the price of guidance.”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 16]

The wealth and gift of life has been bestowed upon them, yet they have spent it all in the land of idle neglect and

فَمَا رِيحَتْ بِحَرْثِهِمْ

“so their commerce doth not prosper.”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 16]

All the while, the examples of the ones before them proclaim loudly

فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا مِثْلَ أَيَّامِ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ

“What expect they save the like of the days of those who passed away before them?”

[*Yûnus* 10: 102]

But they have turned a deaf ear; woe to them! Have not they pondered over their baseless hope because

وَأَنْ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونَ قَدِ اقْتَرَبَ أَجَلُهُمْ

“that it may be that their own term draw nigh?”

[*al-A'raf* 7: 185]

Indeed the one who lives in the present should benefit himself from the lessons of history, for no one can ever be certain of his future. Every moment passes never to come back, and the depth of nights are yet to be restored while time is marching along for those who are alive at the moment. Therefore buy [the salvation of] your soul while the market is still open and its price is being offered, and pay no heed to the whispers that beguile you towards negligence and indifference, for indeed what may happen tomorrow can never be relied upon.

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

Overcoming Self-Desires

WHEN THE PIOUS REALISED the great value of life, they killed and buried their self-desires and hence experienced the verity of being truly alive. They rushed to collect what the hands of slackers had dropped, catching it in their palms of hard endeavor. Moreover, as their inner-eye envisioned the Day of Judgment, they belittled the good deeds they had, causing their hearts to become exanimate out of fear (of Allāh), and consequentially, the inanimate creatures longed for them, as the trunk of the tree longed for the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ), and the heavens longed to have 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (*raḍiy Allāhu 'anhū*).

How many are those whose yearning to performing pilgrimage gave them the strength to walk all the way! [Their yearning is strong] To the degree that the house of deposited vows (the black stone) is about to kiss them first before they try to kiss it. And even as the pilgrim completes the rituals then returns home, the arrow of their longing for it remains lodged in the heart of Minā.¹ Their

¹ It is a location situated some 5 kilometers to the east of Makkah. Where Pilgrims would go to stone where the devil was as this is where it is said that Ibrāhīm stoned the devil.

thoughts abide by the limits set by the Lord, while their hearts are devoted to only love of the Creator. They avoid crowding with the throngs in the market of desires, and their longing for their Lord is too strong to be encompassed in the limits of this worldly life, therefore they forsake it in favour of enjoying the vast stretch of loftiness in the desert of piety, where they pitch their tents of glory in the stretches of guidance and the carefully chosen shores on the rivers of truthfulness. And so, they prepare for the voyage of shedding tears in these rivers, secluding themselves with their distress (about the Hereafter) - but the dears of the desert aid them. The bulbuls of their anxious hearts thrummed in the dark; if only you could see how they uneasily change from side to side while lying down on the ember of anxiety.

O you whose conduct has been a far cry from piety, self-imprisoned in the cell of ignorance and wishful hopes, should you emerge from your prison seeking to alleviate your heart from the distress of your hardship, I advise you to pay a visit to them in their valley. They are the ones who as soon as they reflected upon the creation, they understood the purpose of their life, and therefore they packed their belongings prior to their departure and prepared themselves to embark the journey. While people indulge in the mire of earning wealth, the pious are reposing in the shades of content. While those whose hearts and souls are infected with the sickness of desires seek help in the hospital of trials, the pious enjoy their stay in the castles of safety. While the negligent slackers lay down on the bed of idleness, the pious are active in the race tracks of

يَرْجُونَ خَيْرًا لَّنْ تَكُونُ

“they look forward to imperishable gain”

[*Fāṭir* 35: 29]

They drag the horses of strong will in the fields of the endeavors, whipping this worldly life with the whip of pride so that they do not tarry, and times hardly passes until they have safely crossed the toll bridge without paying its imposed tax. Their wealth lies in their hearts;

سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ

“Their mark is on their foreheads”,

[*al-Fath* 48: 29]

Thus what they were deprived from never caused them any harm, and they are well-pleased with what they will be granted afterwards. They easily endured the exhaustion of the long journey for they know the high status of their final destination. They have tasted the bitterness of trials in this life, so their safety is assured in the next life. May glad tiding be for them on the Day on which it will be said to them

هَذَا يَوْمُكُمْ الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ

“This is your Day which you have been promised”

[*Anbiyā'* 21: 103]

CHAPTER TWENTY SECOND

Tears of Sinners

EXALTED IS HE WHO SENDS the winds of exhortations, that stir up in the hearts - of those who are awake - clouds of sorrow with regards to their past doings, propelling them to the arid land of human nature accompanied by the thunder of forewarning and the lightning of fear, whereupon tears of sorrow rise upward from the deepest reservoirs of the heart to the peak of the head. Thereupon, the wells of the eyes channel their water along the surface of the cheeks, so that when the green grass [of the heart emerges], it sways with pleasure on having received the answer to prayers.

When the clouds of fright roar and thunder, the heart of the sinner becomes agitated, and the layers of his shelled inner secrets open up just as how shells situated in the sea open up to receive the drops of rain, which pours within them drops of determination made of pearls. The spring of gratitude is sincere repentance. When a pure drop from the elixir of happiness¹ is placed on the top of mountains of muddy sins, such a drop will

¹ This term is used to refer to the happiness of the Hereafter i.e. the shortest path that a person should take to attain the pleasure of Allāh.

cause these mountains to crumble down as how the mountain went down [when Allāh, Exalted is He, was about to show up to it]. Thereafter, the dust of these crumbled mountains is transformed into a *kohl* with which the eyes of hearts are treated.

Indeed, it may be that a sin be the cause of person's admission into Paradise. If a person redeems himself with sincerity, his soul - which in the past used to incite him to commit sin - will be transformed into a tranquil soul. When Ibrāhīm (*'alayhi as-salām*) walked along the path of forbearance, his son - the sacrificial lamb - followed him, both of them submitting to the will of Allāh, Allāh cast passivity upon the knife, rendering it inactive. When a repenting person converses with his faculties of sensibility and contemplation, they remind him of his previous sins and make him regret at his mounting audacity. Thereupon, the eyes that used to indulge in sin erupt with tears of regret, and the repenting tongue repeats the words: I shall never return to sins ever after, and the functionary of bracing begins deploying hard workers to build up the edifice of his heart. There, o sinner, whenever you are troubled by a matter, let your tears atone your affairs.

O you who severed the connection to his Lord, return. O you who vowed to reject his Lord, repent. You were honoured when Iblīs [the devil] was ordered to prostrate to you, whereas Iblīs was cast afar when he refused to do so. Yet I truly wonder at you! How could you, inspite of that, make reconciliation with the devil and boycott your Lord?! How ruined you are, for your status in the Eyes of your Lord is greater than the status of the Night of Power (i.e. *Laylatil Qadr*).

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

Abandoning Lust and Desires

THE ROPES OF LIFE ARE A mere illusion with which glory is affected, but they were cut off at the time when desires were in touch with the pride of Pharaoh. As Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) threw his staff of asceticism and lo! it swallowed the sticks of desires.

This worldly life is a market where the clamour and tumult of desires fills the ears, therefore if you busy yourself with it, how would you be able to hear exhortation and beneficial preaching? The “ant-prince” of providential help calls out to the righteous to save themselves as the tribulation of “Sulaymān” (*'alayhi as-salām*) approaches: desist your base nature from consuming those morsels of worldly delights that you so desire

سَلَيْمَنَّ وَجُنُودُهُ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

“lest Sulaymān and his armies crush you, unperceiving.”

[*al-Naml* 27: 18]

[i.e. the metaphor is that of the ants which were in the valley that Sulaymān (*'alayhi as-salām*) and his soldiers were transpiring,

and had the ants not heeded the warning of their prince to enter into safety, they would have been crushed by Sulaymān's (*'alayhi as-salām*) army]

Among the “Seven people whom Allāh will shade on the Day in which there is no shade but His” was a man who was seduced and invited by a beautiful women but he refused her advances saying, I fear Allāh”, so pay heed, O you who answered the temptation of a deformed old woman. When desire sparks before the eyes of the pious, they attempt to stretch out with their hands to reach for it. However, their hearts notice the thread that would set off the trap that would ensnare them, so they flee from it beating the wings of warning, as they say to others,

يَلَيْتَ قَوْمِي

يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ بِمَا غَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

“I wish my people could know. Of how my Lord has forgiven me and placed me among the honored.”

[*Yāsīn* 36: 26-27]

Indeed, it is difficult to swim in a lake infested by crocodiles, to travel through a land populated by beasts. O you who are chained in the backyard of this mortal existence, censure is looming over you, yet you are unable to hear the counsel of sincere advice, as the glue in your ear prevents you!

Many ruinous lusts and desires glimmer in your eyes, while the exhortations of Ya‘qūb [within yourself] clenches its fingers to warn you from the [punishment] on the Day of Judgment, yet you never pay heed to it. Woe to you, bring your ignorant self to

the assembly of contemplation, for even Ḥabīb al-‘Ajmī¹ changed after hearing the sermons of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.

O you who is settled in on his desires though he is but transient in this world; O you who wastes their capital of lifespan; when will you return to your senses? O you whose heart is blind to the degree that even [Prophet] ‘Īsā (*‘alayhi as-salām*) would not be able heal it; O you whose idleness is even longer than the epoch of the cave dwellers’ sleep; let us for the sake of argument, assume that death does not come all of a sudden! Do you not know what ailment might come all of a sudden?

Woe to you, precious little time is left for you so rush to benefit from what remains from the wick of the lamp [of your lifespan]; are you not even affected by the voice of exhortation? Do you not even feel pain from the lashes of sermon?

O circle of misery, where is your beginning? O land of wandering, where is your end? O you whose suffering is like that of Ayyūb’s (*‘alayhi as-salām*), how long will you remain living on garbage? Is it not high time for you to

أَرْكُضْ بِرِجْلِكَ هَذَا مُغْتَسِلٌ بَارِدٌ وَشَرَابٌ ﴿٤٢﴾

“Strike [the ground] with your foot; this is a [spring for] a cool bath and drink.”

[Ṣaḍ 38: 42]

O you who tarry from returning to your Lord, and yet do not

¹ Ḥabīb al-‘Ajmī is a known pious ascetic who used to be involved in worldly matters then upon hearing the preaching of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī he changed all his life until he comes to this high state of *īmān* and his *karamāt* are known. See al-Dhahabī, *Sīyar al-A‘lām an-Nubulā*, [6/134]

join the journey of Pilgrimage; O you who is so far astray from guidance that no sacrifice can compensate for his sins, O you who abandoned the path of good conduct, and have detached from the group of the pious, when you come to the reckoning that the sickness of desire is leading to your death from expulsion [from the Mercy of your Lord], crawl to the tent of the people who join ties with their Lord [i.e. the pious] and take witness of two trustworthy individuals over your will, then call your lord in humility, regretting all the moments you have missed without utilising them in good deeds.

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

Beware of Sins

THE GREATEST OF TRIALS is when your enemies' rejoice over your downfall; the enmity of the devil is ancient, as it started from the day on which Allāh,

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا
لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ

“And [mention] when We said to the angels, ‘Prostrate before Adam’; so they prostrated, except for Iblis. He refused and was arrogant and became of the disbelievers..”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 34]

And the envy of *Shaytān* started from the moment it was said,

أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ

“Will You place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood.”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 30]

On the other hand, the joy of your peers [i.e. those who wish

good for you] is the greatest joy of all; therefore the envious ones' greatest revenge is when you neglect or overlook [your religious obligations], so if you wish to avenge your enviers, you must rectify yourself and your affairs. Nevertheless, observe how you have rejected the opportunity yourself, and allowed your enemies to gloat over your mistakes and shortcomings. As one poet said:

Enemies cannot do harm to an ignorant, as much as the
ignorant does harm to himself

Woe to you, succeed in overcoming your desires as you shall praise the consequences of your safety. As one poet said:

A person is pleased when tasting the sweet,
but the sweet becomes bitter after it causes harm
So taste the bitter if ultimately it shall benefit you,
and never opt for a sweet that shall fetch you harm

Beware of sins, for if they did not have any punishment other than feeling the shame of meeting your Lord while you carry these sins upon you, it would have been enough. The best moment of Ya'qūb (*'alayhi as-salām*) was when he saw Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) [after their separation] and the most difficult moment to the brothers of Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) was when they met him [after they had wronged him]. If the heart was pure it would be in a tumult when a sin was committed, but if the sin was repeated often then it would pass by the heart without being noticed or rejected. When the sin is alien to the heart, the heart feels a foreign presence that it finds discomfiting. But when the heart is used to the sin, the heart will become accustomed to it, and will accept without a second thought. This is like the example of a person who wears a black garment, since he will not be concerned if he spills black on it.

O you whose sins have wounded him, you know the ointment that shall soothe you. If you could not afford paying a wailer [i.e. if you could not weep over your sins] then suffice by lowering your head out of sorrow and regret [i.e. show humility and regret] because the one in calamity does not go unnoticed. If you could not achieve the glory of Mu'ādh (*raḍīy Allāhu 'anhu*)¹, then at least be not unable to taste the humility of the three who stayed back² [so that Allāh might be merciful to you because of your humble state].

Take strong will to be your guide, if you did not know the way; the bafflement of the seeker may lead him to the water of *Madyan*.³ Walk in the valley of the night [engage in night prayer], dismount in the valley of humility while showing the greatest state of wretched humbleness, and be attentive so that the chants of the arrivers [i.e. the pious] may move your hearts. Those who took the path may facilitate the arrival of the one detached [from his Lord] for how many are those from the first generation (i.e. generation of the Prophet (ﷺ)) who eventually became leaders of

¹ Mu'ādh bin Jabal: ibn 'Amr ibn Aws al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī, Abū 'Abdur-Raḥmān, one of the foremost Companions known for his knowledge of legal rulings and the Qur'ān. He was present at the pledge of 'Uqbah and witnessed *Badr* and the following battles and was martyred due to a plague in the year 17H or 18H.

² See the full story of the three companions in the *tafsīr* of the *ayah*, "And [He also forgave] the three who were left alone [i.e., boycotted, and then regretted their error] to the point that the earth closed in on them in spite of its vastness and their souls confined [i.e., anguished] them and they were certain that there is no refuge from Allāh except in Him. Then He turned to them so they could repent. Indeed, Allāh is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful.." [al-Taubah 9:118].

³ The city of Prophet Shu'ayb (*'alayhi as-salām*).

armies?! Do not get bored from standing [i.e. at the door of Allāh's Forgiveness and Mercy] even if you are reprimanded, and do not stop apologising [for your sins] even if you are rejected. When a gate is opened for the incomers [i.e. attained Allāh's Love and Pleasure] rush to it fervently, lay down the head of humility and stretch out your hands while begging your Lord by saying,

وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا

“be charitable unto us”

[*Yūsuf* 12: 88]

so that the answer you may hear is

لَا تُثْرِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ

“No blame will be upon you today”

[*Yūsuf* 12: 92]

CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE

The Love of Allāh, Most High

PARADISE IS GIVEN TO YOU in trade of worldly detachment and asceticism [i.e. removing the love of this worldly life from your heart]; Hell is kept away from you if you abandon the [temptation] of this worldly life; love cannot convince of its sincerity unless it is inscribed into the soul, because the authority of love never accepts bribes.

O you who seeks his Lord, detach yourself from the love of yourself, for your heart is too fragile and weak to have your Lord and yourself therein at the same time; it is either to keep Allāh by Himself or yourself alone; and when you forget your love for yourself, only then will you find Allāh in your heart. When Ibrāheem was in a state of rigorous self-denial, his strength manifested itself the day he said "I have nothing to request from you."¹ Indeed, the moment his body entered into a new realm after his detachment from the [worldly] catapult was more gratifying than

¹ *Shu'ab al-Imān* (1077): "When when Ibrāhīm (*'alayhi as-salām*) was about being thrown in fire when Angel Jibrā'il asked him if he would like him to do anything to help him but Ibrāhīm replied: I have nothing to request from you, I only ask Allāh."

any other moment. Indeed, it was a journey at which the feet of contentment walked across the land of longing. As the poet said:

I visited you as I was longing for you, but even if the land had been
full of embers I would still have walked on it to reach you

The attributes of the Creator are shown in the beauty of Perfection. Hearts steeped in His love. The price is dear; it is proclaimed that the blood of the devotee is the price for achieving nearness to the Lord. The love that is steadfast responds by saying: if our hearts were to shed their blood, it would be nothing compared to one look [from the Lord] upon us. Love [of the devotee] is placed in the hands of tribulation, while the veins of desires are cut off with the knife of humility, and all the while the Beloved (i.e. Allāh) asks them: Will you be patient enough to endure the trials? the souls reply back,

قَالُوا لَا ضَيْرَ إِنَّا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا مُقْلِبُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

“They said, ‘No harm. Indeed, to our Lord we will return.’”

[*al-Shu‘arā’* 26: 50]

As the poet said:

I devoted myself and my heart to your love.
May Allāh never free my soul from your Love
Here I am, upset with myself for your sake.
I even despised my life after you left me
If the ember of yearning is blazing in my heart.
Our meeting shall be the water by which you shall extinguish it.

The people (i.e. the devotees) are unaware of their own existence due to their complete devotion to the One who brought

them into existence. When someone knocked on the door of Abū Yazīd² asking, 'Is Abū Yazīd at home? Abū Yazīd replied from inside his house: Abū Yazīd himself is searching for Abū Yazīd but cannot find him!' Indeed, no one can recognise the secret code of devotees except a person of that ilk. Only ask Layla about the state of her lover whose nickname was the Madman of Layla³ (in his love for her)? Their love was so deep that they even enjoyed the anguish that ensued from such a love, just because they knew that this was what their beloved wanted.

Even the actions of the beloved, regardless of their kind, are loved; when Ḥarām ibn Malhānaṭ⁴ was stabbed he said: I have won, by the Lord of Ka'bah. And Swaid ibn Shu'bah⁵ said while he was on his bed suffering all kinds of trials and sickness: By Allāh, I would not like Allāh to lessen my trials even by the equivalent of the size of a small nail. As the poet said:

They wonder at a heart that longs for agony,
they are unaware that in reality it is sweeter than honey

The beloved is always loved, even if he tortures his lover, be-

² Famous ascetic and pious worshipper from the early generations.

³ Layla and Qais are two famous lovers whose love was platonic. Due to the excessive love that Qais had for his lover he spent his life writing platonic poetry about Layla to the extent people named him the madman of Layla.

⁴ The Maternal uncle of Anas ibn Malik who was murdered by 'Amir Ibn al-Tufayl at the infamous incident of the "well of 'Awanah." Upon which the Prophet invoked Allāh against 'Amir for thirty nights and so 'Amir after these thirty nights suffered plague and died.

⁵ There are two people hold the same name. In any case, both of them are pious people from the early generations.

cause the mountains of love are deep-rooted in the lands of the heart, and therefore no storm of calamities can cause it to shake. Even when al-Ḥajjāj⁶ crucified Māhān⁷ the worshipper, he remained extolling Allāh, keeping count of his exaltations on his fingers, so that by the time he reached the number twenty nine he was stabbed yet remained in that state for a month, his finger not changing from that number.

When the knowledge is rooted in the heart, all calamities become bearable. If such knowledge is mixed with love [for Allāh] then calamities will surely have no effect whatsoever because a devotee enjoys the pain he suffers for the sake of his beloved. Some people passed by a person whose fingers were cut due to a disease. When they advised him to seek treatment, he replied: even if you were to cut me into pieces, my love for Him would increase even more. As one poet said:

I wonder at the censors, what they have to do with me,
Do not they know that the one killed is content with his death?

⁶ Al-Ḥajjāj Ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafī a known tyrant who oppressed and killed many people including the famous pious worshipper from the tabi'īn; Sa'īd ibn Jubayr whose *du'ā'* was known to be answered. The latter invoked Allāh to make his blood to be the last blood that al-Ḥajjāj could shed, and Allāh answered his supplication and so al-Ḥajjāj died not long after him.

⁷ He is Māhān al-Hanāfī; Abū Sālīm al-A'war; known as the glorifier because of his excessive exalting of Allāh. He was known of his piety and devotion.

CHAPTER TWENTY SIX

Seeking Knowledge

KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION [based upon that knowledge] are twins whose mother is high aspirations. O youth, the essence of your soul lies in seeking knowledge, and the adornment of your soul is acting upon what you have learnt.

Whoever does not act upon his knowledge will never recognise the value of what he possesses; he will be like a person carrying musk perfume but is unable to smell it because he has the flu. The vast ocean of the learned person's knowledge throws onto the shore of utterance words that are like pearls, which are picked up by the hands of understanding.

By Allāh, the learned [i.e. he who acquired the sacred knowledge and acted upon it] is a ring on the index finger of time. The learned are strangers in this world as they are a few, among the multitude of ignorant people. The written work that a learned person authors and compiles is indeed his immortal child, and his flag of honour.

O teacher, hearten and uplift the novice (in his path for seeking knowledge),

وَقَدِّرْ فِي السَّرْدِ

“and measure the links (thereof)”

[*Sabā’* 34: 11]

For the learned is firmly planted whereas the learner is in a state of anxiety. O you seeker of knowledge, humble yourself while seeking knowledge, and know that when sand humbly accepted creatures stepping on it with their feet, Allāh made it pure enough for a person to wipe his face with [in *tayammum*¹]. Do not fall into despair as to whether you would ever be strong so long as you continue doing good, because sands shall turn into stones and rocks over time. Endure the nights of hardship, because if you look through the eye of patience you shall see the dawn of reward. Indeed, the lofty ranks can be attained only by undergoing hardship! Did you not notice the thorns growing beside the roses?

O novice, be gentle on yourself - coping with ignorance is difficult, therefore you should move from the basement of concessions to the roof of noble acts requiring determination and strong will. This demands that you never give up striving to achieve your goal, for rain starts with the pitter-patter of drops before it turns into a torrent.

Persist in attending the assemblies of knowledge, for an infant needs to be breastfed time and time again, so that he is strong enough to be weaned when he grows up. Indeed, even drops of water that drip on a rock should leave a mark on it when such

¹ Alternative method for performing *wuḍu* when water is unfound or its amount is insufficient.

drops are continual. O you who is parched with the thirst of desires in the desert of youth, change your course to the road of knowledge, for through knowledge you will come across many a water fountain that shall help you in your journey through the desert.

The road to virtues is paved with hardships and trials; those whose resolve is feeble will turn back from it. When the determined suffers a hardship or encounters a calamity whose taste is bitter, he instantly thinks of the sweetness of the final outcome, upon which he brushes away the dirt from the deep-seated [high purpose] in his heart. A judicious person endures hardships patiently, because he is aware of how close at hand ease is, whereas the ignorant is his exact opposite. This is similar to how the wood of the olive plant burns without producing smoke, unlike the wood of licorice that produces smoke as it burns. Indeed, man's nature is like a small child, whereas his intellect is like an adult.²

⁴ The author has a detail discussion on seeking knowledge available in English, '*Sincere Counsel to the Seekers of Sacred Knowledge*', published by Dār as-Sunnah Publishers 2012 under the Ibn Jawzī Series. The main concept running throughout the work is on acquiring knowledge which is of spiritual benefit purifying the intention, the challenges, the pitfalls and obstacles the seeker confronts, and acting on the basis of the acquired knowledge.

CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN

The Worldly Life is Unsuitable for Settlement

MY BROTHERS, this life is like a farewell assembly, so be patient over its pleasures, for one day it will cease to exist, and beware of its evil, for it even succeeded in casting a spell upon the magicians of Babylon. Indeed, the things that people are averse to doing in this life are actually to be found in the branches of the beloved [i.e. the things you dislike are often the ones that draw you near to your beloved]. Everyone who felt secure from its evil, ended up in state of fear regarding its outcome.

You have spent all your life seeking the pleasures of this life, and yet you have not gained from it anymore than what the hand of Qais could gain from Layla.¹

When you are in the assembly [at which sermons and religious reminders are given] you awake from the intoxication of this

¹ They never married or met but their love remained only expressed in words. This example is used to show that a person will not achieve anything out of it as Qais could not marry the one he loved.

worldly life briefly, but it is not long before you start to crave again for the heat of its wine. Indeed, there is no joy in sighting the flashes of lightning, if you are walking through the darkness. You rein yourself back in with awakening, but by the time you leave the assembly your nature becomes unleashed again [i.e. back to its previous state of worldly indulgence]. Your nature prevents you from changing yourself; because although you are present in body, your heart is completely absent; though you desire attaining the [the reward of the] Hereafter, your endeavors are only focused on obtaining this worldly life.

This worldly life is a land unsuitable for settling down; it is only when the harvest has been reaped that it is taken to its place of final settlement.

I wonder at a person standing at the foot of a bridge for so long that he forgets the name of the town across it, which he was meaning to get to. Woe to you, though the pleasures of this worldly life are sweet and tempting, know that the questioning over it will be strict and severe. The time at which a woman conceives is one of playfulness, but the actual hardship that awaits her is at the time of her delivery. This life is like a promiscuous woman who does not settle for one man; those who sought after it are shamed and condemned.

The worldly life is a bridge leading over an ocean of doom, so you had better be serious about learning to swim before passing over it, because you can never be certain that you will not slip off it, or encounter a storm that blows you off the bridge into the water. Thus be wary of it despite how safe, you feel in it, and expect its sorrow in spite of your contentment with it.

This life is a house of trials and calamities, similar to the palace in Egypt wherein Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) fled to the door with his forbearance [running from the seduction of the wife of his master] whereas Zalikhhah rushed to the door [chasing Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*)] enflamed by her desires. The garments of deeds shall be presented for intercession; therefore those whose garments were torn from the front will express their woefulness, whereas those whose garments were torn from behind, their intercession shall be saved for their time of need.

O you whose desire cast him into the well of love for this worldly life, you should know that the caravan of fate brings you a message every night saying: "Is there anyone requesting anything so that I may fulfill it for him?"

So, ensure your attentiveness when this message tosses down to you the rope of salvation, and stand up all night on the feet of those

تَجَافَى جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ

"Their sides part [i.e., they arise] from [their] beds."

[*al-Sajdah* 32: 16],

stretch out the fingers of

تَسْتَجِفُّ جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ

"they supplicate their Lord in fear and aspiration"

[*al-Sajdah* 32: 16],

وَأَلْقِ مَا فِي يَمِينِكَ

"Throw that which is in thy right hand!"

[*Tāhā* 20: 69]

The Worldly Life is Unsuitable for Settlement

So that you may climb out [of your well of desires] as quickly as possible, and do not grasp at the walls of the well of desires, because it is built of loose dirt that will collapse over you. After you have rescued yourself, by your determination of returning [to Allāh], beware of the beasts on the road; so walk in the light of the lamp of certainty and conviction, and leave behind you the signposts veering you off the right course towards the ways of desire, because only after arriving at your destination in the morn shall you be able to breathe a sigh of relief.

CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT

In the Saying of Allāh: “*The reckoning of mankind draws ever near*”¹

AS THE WARNING OF

اقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ

“The reckoning of mankind draws ever near”

[*Anbiyā’* 21: 1]

was called out in the midst of the companions of the Prophet, the apprehension in their hearts, arising out of their fear of Allāh, reflected in their eyes, causing them to cry rivers of sadness

فَسَالَتِ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا

“so that valleys flow according to their measure”

[*al-Ra’d* 13: 17]

Abū Bakr² (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*) gave away all his wealth, not even

¹ *Anbiyā’* 21: 1

² Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq: ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Uthmān ibn Āmir al-Qurashī. The first *Khakīfah* of the Messenger (ﷺ), his companion in the cave, his closest friend and one of the ten promised Paradise. He was the first man to accept Islām and died in the year 13H.

sparing his garment, 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) wished he were an inanimate shrub, and 'Uthmān³ (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) wished after his death never to be resurrected [out of fearing Allāh]. And 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib⁴ (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) shouted at this worldly life, I divorce you thrice, therefore you are unlawful to me now for ever; even though a single divorce would have sufficed, but he did it thrice to ensure that someday his self-desire would not rekindle the hope of returning to it; not that his nobility would ever allow him to seek a loophole by means of which he could return to it. Abū ad-Dardā⁵ (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) wished he were a fodder plant chewed by animals, and 'Imrān ibn al-Ḥusayn⁶ (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) wished he was reduced to ashes. Indeed you listen to the Qur'ān but undoubtedly you do not hear it [its message and injunctions] the way they heard it.

³ 'Uthmān bin 'Affān: *Dhu an-Nurayn* 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān ibn Abū al-'Ās ibn Umayyah al-Qurashī al-Amawī, the third Rightly Guided *Khalīfah* and one of the ten promised Paradise. He was known for his generosity and freely giving in the Way of Allāh. He was married to two daughters of the Prophet (ﷺ), Ruqayyah and after her death, Umm Kulthūm. He was martyred in the year 35H.

⁴ 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib: ibn 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim al-Qurashī al-Hāshimī, the fourth Rightly Guided *Khalīfah* and one of ten promised Paradise. He accepted Islām at the age of thirteen and was famous for his chivalry, bravery and knowledge. He married Fāṭimah, the daughter of the Prophet (ﷺ) and was martyred in the year 40H.

⁵ Abū ad-Dardā': Uwaymir ibn Mālik ibn Zayd ibn Qays al-Khazrajī al-Anṣārī. There is a difference of opinion concerning his name. He accepted Islām on the day of *Badr* and witnessed *Uḥud*. He was from the Legal Jurists and ascetics of the Companions. He died in the year 32H.

⁶ 'Imrān bin Ḥusayn: al-Khuzā'i al-Ka'bī Abū Nujaid. He accepted Islām during the year of *Khaybar* and reported some *aḥādīth* from the Prophet (ﷺ). He died in the year 52H.

Devotees are focused upon worshipping their Lord; their feet are lined up in harmony within the rows [of *Ṣalāh*], standing [in *Ṣalāh*] their weight on the throes of fear [of Allāh] so when they are affected by their fear [of Allāh] they shift their weight off the foot of fear to the foot of hope.

The condition of people differ at the time of their death; some endured the fear [of Allāh] until the moment they died, such as ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*), who said on his death bed: ‘woe to ‘Umar should his Lord not forgive him’, and some were distressed by the thirst of their fearful cautiousness so they cooled themselves down with the water of hope, such as Bilāl ibn Abī Rabah⁷ (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*), whose wife lamented while he was on his death bed saying; ‘how grievous and sorrowful is this moment for me!’ while he on the other hand said jubilantly ‘how joyous and pleasant a moment this is, soon I will meet Muḥammad and his companions!’ This is because Bilāl (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*) knew that the Imām who lead the *Ṣalāh* [i.e. the Prophet (ﷺ)] would never forget the one who announced the call for *Ṣalāh* [i.e. Bilāl] and so he mitigated death with the comfort of hope.

While Sulaymān al-Taimī⁸ was on his death bed he said to his son: ‘Narrate to me the ḥadīths related to concessions, so that I meet Allāh, Exalted is He, while I am optimistic in Him.’ For how

⁷ Bilāl ibn Abī Rabah: His story is almost certainly the most famous of all of the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ). He was born in Makkah into slavery, and was tortured by his Umayya ibn Khalaf when he refused to renounce his new faith. He was purchased by Abū Bakr as-Ṣiddīq, who set him free. He became the Prophet’s muezzin at Medīnah, and later moved to Syria, where he died in the year 17H

⁸ One of the famous worshippers

long should a traveler walk. Surely he must stop and seek repose at some point.

O you of feeble will: How far are you from the path on which Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*) suffered, because of which Nūḥ (*'alayhi as-salām*) mourned, for the sake of which Ibrāhīm (*'alayhi as-salām*) was thrown into fire, on which Ishāq (*'alayhi as-salām*) was laid down to be slaughtered, Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) was sold for a meager price, Zakarīyyah (*'alayhi as-salām*) was cut into pieces, Yaḥyā (*'alayhi as-salām*) was murdered, Ayyūb (*'alayhi as-salām*) suffered all kinds of calamities, Dāwūd (*'alayhi as-salām*) wept so much, Sulaymān (*'alayhi as-salām*) did not rejoice despite all that he possessed, Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) desired to see His Lord, 'Isā (*'alayhi as-salām*) wandered with the beasts in the desert, and Muḥammad (ﷺ) endured poverty!

The first step in the path towards Allāh is to sacrifice one's soul; this is the path, yet where are those who will walk it! This is the shirt of Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) waiting for Ya'qūb (*'alayhi as-salām*), and here is the Mountain of Sinā awaiting Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*); where is Junayd⁹ to witness and where is al-Shiblī¹⁰ to listen to all this?

⁹ He is the nephew [i.e. sister's son] of al-Sarī al-Saqtī. He is among the known pious worshippers of his time.

¹⁰ Known pious worshipper.

CHAPTER TWENTY NINE

The Marvelous Creation of Allāh

C OLOURFUL ARE THE JEWELS of existence that adorn the brides of creation, to delight the eyes of the slaves [of Allāh]; such wonders! From the moment you are admitted into the kingdom [of Allāh] you shall never stop admiring the adornments [of His creation] so, look for a moment with the eyes of contemplation while lowering the gaze of your bodily eyes, and then answer me; is there any better universe than this? Leave out of your house of retreat, and walk across the passage of your contemplation and stop to contemplate at the wide open spaces; reflect on how the green grows in the presence of the Creator's mysteries; growing plants all wearing the same garb of solidity; dancing in the springtime in celebration of the season of irrigation they had. Contemplate the multitude of colours that exist in a single branch, how splendid is the handiwork of the Creator!

Pay attention to their signs, and notice how they all direct the heedless to the One Who created them, While people are busy in their self-desires. Listen to the sound of leaves while they are hanging on their sticks so may the rhyme of their movements bring

back the one who is far [to the right path].

I wonder how you reflect on others yet forget reflecting on yourself! You should use the eye of your intellect to reflect deeply on how a drop of seed is dipped in the blood of menses is being crafted by the carpenter of fate shaping the faculties of hearing and seeing without even touching it, all the while it is embraced while wearing its garment and covering up with a robe of a clot to transform afterward into a lump of flesh. Then it changes to flesh and blood so afterward is covered with skin to protect it from the hands of harm until eventually coming out in the form of infant who gradually grows up to become a child; then after some time he experiences the sphere of utterance and climbs out the robe of intellect and reasoning. There are many calls that have been voiced out between the legs of transforming due to the shaking shackles of wisdom in the bangles of mind. Every time it makes a sound the tongues of guidance chant songs of meanings but how would a reckless deaf hear all that? Far from happening it is, for a person who suffers the flu cannot enjoy the smell of roses similar to how a person in prison cannot enjoy the day of *ʿĪd*. So, if you were aware of all these wonders yet have not been amazed then be surprised of how you have not so far!!

How could you not be thoughtful though you attained the instruments of intellect and reasoning! How could you blind your heart after seeing the truth?! Indeed, the most amazing acts of Allāh's Power is when

وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمِهِ

“Allāh has sent him astray due to knowledge.”

[*al-Jāthiyah* 45: 23]

CHAPTER THIRTY

Mankind is in Need of Allāh, The Most High

THE LENIENCY OF ALLĀH toward His slaves is pre-eternal. As the child is born He sparks for him a river of milk coming out from the springs of his mother's breast and implanted instinctual love towards him into the hearts of his parents until He overwhelms them with His grace. Yet, after this child grows up and becomes aware of the One Who bestowed all these graces upon him, he utilises all these graces in disobeying Allāh. As the poet have said:

A person spend his nights wearing the robe of impiety,
Nevertheless Allāh covers him with the shelter of
His forbearance without knowing so.

After he reaches the age of puberty and realises the peak of his strength he rushes to issue forth a challenge [i.e. start involving in acts of disobedience]! But for whose interest? And against whom? To get to where? And who are you in the first place to proclaim a challenge? May Allāh annihilate the one who does not appreciate His favours upon him.

O you! Allāh has bestowed upon you a mercy incomparable to any other mercy; when you repent from your sins He orders his Angels to overlook what he recorded against you, and when He judges you He covers your shortcomings so that others do not see the yellowness of your skin caused by your shame. O you whose innate nature is that of purity, beware of debasing yourself with the filth of sins. Lift up the tails of piety above the trash of self-desires and beware of the sprays of mistakes so it does not touch your pure garments.

To observe your duties you should firmly shield yourself [from sins] so look ahead because

فَإِنْ زَلَلْتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ
مَا جَاءَكُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَاَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

“But if you slip [i.e., deviate] after clear proofs have come to you, then know that Allāh is Exalted in Might and Wise.”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 209]

And know that the fountain of your eyes shall wash off the dirt staining your heart.

Since your affairs were sound at your first day of

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ
عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ

“And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], ‘Am I not your Lord?’”

[*al-A'raf* 7: 172],

Thus you better rectify your affairs at the end so that what is in between be forgiven. O you who has been far away from his home where it was said

أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ

“Am I not your Lord”

[*al-A'raf* 7: 172]

did you not long for it yet? As the poet said:

Give your heart to whoever you desire
for Love is only granted to the first lover

O you who turned away from his Lord, what else kept you away from your Lord and so you turned to instead? Why have you let yourself be led by another? [It is time] for you to stand on the right path.

The moans of sinners [regretting their sins] is more beloved to Allāh than the exaltation of His glorifiers.

The obedient is guided through his deeds, the sinner is humiliated because of his sins, and the mistaken plays the strings of his fearing Allāh and chants the songs of shame.

It is amazing how the Possessor of the creation (i.e. Allāh) asks His slaves to drop a tear though He created the seven oceans;

وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

“And to Allāh belongs the dominion of the heavens

and the earth.”

[*al-Fath* 48: 14]

Nevertheless He sends a message to you saying,

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا

“Who is it that would loan Allāh a goodly loan.”

[*al-Hadid* 57: 11]

Indeed, Pride is His Garment¹ and He is the One Who says [to His slaves]: “I was hungry but you never fed me.”² He cuts off the necks of tongues by using the Sword of

لَا يَسْأَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْأَلُونَ

“He is not questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned.”

[*al-Anbiyā'* 21: 23]

So no one (should) ever object then, when He comes in Grace saying to His slaves: “Is there any one request anything so I fulfill it for him”³

He cannot be encompassed by anything yet He is in the heart of those who draw near to Him in humility; He is unseen by the eyes but appears to the hearts.

¹ Reported by Muslim (2620)

² Reported by Muslim (2569). This statement is used metaphorically to mean, as explained in the hadīth itself, that Allāh blames His slave for not feeding those who asked him for food when he knew they were hungry.

³ See hadīth documented by *al-Jāmi' al-Ulūm wal Hikam* by Ibn Rajab (1/269) and *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr* by al-Suyūṭī (4401)

I wonder at you! Allāh draws near to you though He is in no need for you, whereas you are arrogant with Him though you are in need of Him. When you are far, He draws you near to Him and when you are negligent, He reminds you. He did not favor any other creation over you but nevertheless you still favour everything over Him. Lower the head of your regret before the commencement of the day at which you are blamed because then you will not have the face to answer any of that.

CHAPTER THIRTY ONE

The Supplication of the Pious

WHEN THE PIOUS NOTICED how this worldly life controls those who follow it and how the devil leashed the souls, they turned to the sacred yard of invocation and supplication similar to how a hunted animal runs for his safety, in fear, to the sacred Masjid.¹ You see them walking while they wear the garments of sufficiency and putting on their face the mask of self-content so that

يَحْسِبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ

“An ignorant [person] would think them self-sufficient because of their restraint.”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 273]

They sleep as less as a submerging person would sleep and eat as less as a mourning mother would eat on the day of her calamity because what sorrows damage, is more than what consolation builds.

¹ This is because it is not allowed to kill animals in the *Masjid al-Harām* in Makkah

Only those whose hearts are insightful can recognise them; for the declaration of their high rank is written on their foreheads in a foreign language that only those who know it can read. They observed the consequences of actions with the eyes of their hearts and so they could not find any obstacle keeping them away from their goal [i.e. Paradise] except their self so they searched for a trick with which they can suppress it; a trick that neither Ibn Hind² (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhū*) nor Ibn Al-‘Āṣ³ (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhumā*) would even know of. As they implemented it they succeeded to bottle up their self in a manner that is more violent than of Ibn Tamaljam⁴ for indeed they have bodies of men and hearts of lions.

As the stormy wind of thoughts is instigated and so it turned over the lands of hearts upside down. Then the seeds of strong will and endeavours have been thrown inside the lands and watered with the rain of hard work upon which life revived in the branches of good relation [with Allāh] and so the blossoms of this relation flowered. When they see the remembrance of Allāh, the fragrance of light spreads out, which has a smell that is better than musk that empowers the souls of those who seek the pleasure of their Lord.

² Mu‘āwiyah: Ibn Abū Sufyān ibn Ṣakhr ibn Ḥarb ibn Umayyah ibn ‘Abd Shams al-Qurashī al-Amawī. He accepted Islām in the year of the Conquest and witnessed *Ḥunain* and *al-Yamāmah*. He was one of the scribes who would write the revelation and died in the year 60AH.

³ ‘Amr ibn al-‘Ās: Ibn Wā’il al-Qurashī as-Sahmī. He accepted Islām during the year of *Ḥudaybiyyah* and was the one who conquered Egypt. He died in the year 43AH.

⁴ I could not find his information. [Translator]

No worthwhile results can be achieved unless there is an element of risk involved! So, you whose endeavors are feeble, know that profit is gained only by riding the stormy seas because the precious pearls lie at their bottom; knowledge is attained by sacrificing sleep, and loftiness is sought through self-denial.

He who seeks glory ought to pursue it earnestly because when a person searches for pearls he must dive to collect them. When Abū Bakr (*radīy Allāhu 'anhū*) forsook everything for the sake of Allāh and His Messenger, he earned the praise of Allāh and His Messenger [i.e. being pleased with], and when 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (*radīy Allāhu 'anhū*) divorced this worldly life thrice to ensure he would never return to it, he deserved Paradise to yearn for him [as its inhabitant].

CHAPTER THIRTY TWO

Believing in the Divine Decree (*al-Qadar*)

IF ALLĀH DECREES GOOD for a person, He makes his heart disposed towards accepting sincere advice and guides a voice of admonition to echo in his mind during its periods of leisure and inactivity, just as rain is led to the barren land

يُخْرِجُ بِهِ زَرْعًا مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ ثُمَّ

“He produces thereby crops of varying colors.”

[*al-Zumar* 39: 21]

However, if Allāh turns away from a person, He throws him into an ocean of heedlessness, so that whenever he opens his eyes he only see layer upon layer of darkness, one on top of the other. The means of safety are prepared for the chosen one, while the destiny of the wretched is chained with inadvertence. How wishful is the one doomed as he hopes to reach out [to Allāh] but far removed is this wish when fate denies him this wish just as it denied many before him.

The created is a target and fate is a set of arrows and the One

who you know [i.e. Allāh] is the shooter; so what is the way out? If pillars of fate shake, even the necks of the favored will be troubled; if He is angry at some people their good deeds will never benefit them, but if He is pleased with someone then his bad deeds will not cause him any harm at all. As the storms of fate are instigated, the ocean of divine obligations [upon humans] springs, and space of existence pitches its inhabitants, thus roots of Lineage are uprooted and tents of arrogant are pulled out, the Palace of Cesar is torn down and the strength of Abū Talib¹ is dismissed, the work of Abū Jahl² is in vain, and the army of Chosroes³ is defeated, all the while, the robe of

بَتُّ إِلَيْكَ

“I turn to You in repentance.”

[*al-A'raf* 7: 143]

sprouts. Afterward, when dawn commences and the ocean calms down, it appears that [the highly esteemed] Abū Tālib has drowned whereas Salmān [the Persian]⁴, stands on the shore of safety, and while al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah⁵ was leading his people toward

¹ Abū Tālib: ‘Abd Manaf ibn ‘Abdul-Muttalib ibn Hāshim, an uncle of the Prophet (ﷺ), who looked after him after his father and grandfather died, loved him like one of his sons, let him preach Islām freely, and protected him from the evils that the leaders of Quraysh might have done to him. He did not, however, embrace Islām, and died in the eighth year of the Prophet’s call.

² Abū Jahl: ‘Amr ibn Hāshim ibn al-Mughīrah al-Makhzūmī al-Qurayshī, one of the greatest enemies of the Prophet (ﷺ). He was killed at *Badr* in the year 2H.

³ The title of the king of Persia

⁴ Salmān al-Farsī, the noble Companion of the Prophet (ﷺ).

⁵ One of the highly esteemed leaders of Quraysh who was known of his

the loss, Suhayb [the Roman]⁶ has just arrived from the roman territory [to embrace Islām], and while Abū Jahl laid down in the back of the abandoned, Bilāl⁷ calls out: Praying is indeed better than sleeping.

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intelligence and wisdom. He admitted the miraculous of Qur'ān nevertheless, he denied it and continued insulting and mocking the Prophet (ﷺ). Therefore, Allāh dispraised him in the Qur'ān in many *āyāt*.

⁶ Suhayb al-Rūmī: The noble Companion of the Prophet (ﷺ), who forsake everything and gave up his comfortable life for the sake of Allāh. He was too rich but upon embracing Islām his family deprived him from all his wealth and he became too poor to the extent when he died he did not have a garment that could cover all his body.

⁷ Bilāl ibn Abī Rabah: see page 130

CHAPTER THIRTY THREE

The Punishment of being Completely Occupied with the *Dunya*

THIS WORLDLY LIFE IS LIKE the river of Talūt¹, over which the virtues have made a pronouncement that

فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَنْ لَمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ
مِنِّي

“So whoever drinks from it is not of me, and whoever does not taste it is indeed of me.”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 249]

However, when people positioned themselves in a state like that of Ibn Umm Maktūm² (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*), they were given a small amount of latitude,

إِلَّا مَنْ اعْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ^٣

¹ See his story with Bani Israel in *Surah al-Baqarah*, 2: 247-251.

² One of the companions who was blind yet always enduring all hardships to fulfill his duties and do the good. He was also the one who gives the first *Adhān* of Fajr during the months of Ramaḍān at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ).

“excepting one who takes [from it] in the hollow of his hand.”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 249],

Whereas the heedless ones could not wait, and so they drank their fill from it. Thus, when it was the time to participate in the war against self-desires, they responded with words of self-defeat

لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِغَالُوتَ وَجُودِهِ

“There is no power for us today against Goliath and his soldiers..”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 249]

While those who had disciplined their bodies succeeded, and received the spoils of this war.

This life is like your shadow; if you turn your back to it and walk away from it, it will continue following you, but if you try to chase it and catch it, it will always run away from you. For this Allāh, Exalted is He, Commanded this worldly life to serve those who serve Him, and to enslave those who serve it.

The pious does not pay attention to his shadow, therefore the shadow always follows him, while the one seeking it diligently all the time keeps looking around for it, and is thus unable to see it.

O the one devoted to this worldly life, for how long will you be lost in the desert of confusion

كَالَّذِي اسْتَهْوَتْهُ الشَّيَاطِينُ

“[We would then be] like one whom the devils enticed”

[*al-An‘ām* 6: 71]

Does your assiduity have any limit? Will your hope [to remain in this life] ever end? Woe to you: the ocean never drains out, so be content with your share of the water. Woe to you: walking leisurely making small steps will never get you to your final destination! It is impossible for a person to feel sufficiency when he is not content with what he already has in his hand! Woe to you, all that you rejoice for in this life is actually what you should be sad for, if only you would realise.

This life is like wine; whenever the assiduous drinks from it, his thirst increases. It is sufficient for you to cover your parts with the garment of contentedness, for it casts away the concerns from your heart and replaces them with comfort.

All evil lies in insatiability; how many are those whose thirst does not extinguish because they choke on their drink; indeed the sweetness of honey can be enjoyed in small portions only. The example of a person attached to this life is like a bee that comes across a water lily, gets attracted by its scent and decides to settle upon its leaves. However, when night falls, the leaves draw back and get submerged in the water, and thus the bee meets its death.

Your excessive keenness is like a cloud that can block the bright sun of your intellect. This cloud prevents the heart from perceiving the Hereafter, therefore you should send the platoon of your strong-will, to tear apart this hazy cloud into bits. You have what suffices you, nevertheless you seek what would ruin you. Do you not know that continuing to drink water even after your thirst has been extinguished will make you perpetually thirsty. How chained you are to this life! Indeed, fever is the companion of honey, and the one diligently pursuing this life shall never have a life - because what kind of life is it when someone is neither sufficed nor

content! Despite all this, such a person is always more bewildered than a bug on the back of a camel, though what he is after is less in worth than the wing of a mosquito.

Allāh ordained this life, so that we subsist on what suffices to maintain the health of our bodies, so that we can dedicate these bodies for that which they were created [i.e. worshipping Allāh]. Exercising indulgence in acquiring more than what is required, compromises this noble purpose; a person who spends his entire life accumulating wealth is in reality storing it for his heirs as one day he will die leaving all this wealth behind; all he does is burn himself with the fire of his assiduousness, while others get the benefit of what he has painstakingly collected, in the same manner that people benefit from the remains of a burning stick.

How many are those who were doomed by this worldly life!
How many are those whose love of this life was the cause of their ruin!

O you who is as wishful as Kan‘ān³, as deceitful as Nimrūd⁴, as miserly as Tha‘labah⁵, and as prone to error as Nu‘mān: When it comes to collecting wealth you are like Ḥāṭib [ibn Abī Balṭa‘ah]⁶

³ The ruler of ancient Babel

⁴ An ancient king who ruled the world from east to west and challenged Ibrāhīm (*‘alayhi as-salām*) and so Allāh destroyed him and all his troops by sending on them an army of mosquitoes.

⁵ Tha‘labah Ibn Ḥāṭib whose greed and miserliness stopped him from paying the Zakah despite of all his wealth.

⁶ Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Balṭa‘ah: Abū ‘Abdullāh, he emigrated to Medīnah and fought

(*radīy Allāhu 'anhu*), but when it comes to squandering away your life then you are as generous as Ḥātim.⁷ You walk on the road of hope the same way as Ash'ab⁸, but what would you do when you fall into regret like the regret of al-Kasa'ī.⁹

You have thrown yourself into the deep well of worldly love!
When will piety arrive to rescue from you from your condition, so
that you would be among those who would hear the chants of joy

بَشْرَى

“Glad tidings”

[*Yūsuf* 12: 19]

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at Badr, Uhud and Khandaq, among other battles. He witnessed negotiations that led to the truce of Hudaibiyah. He died in Madīnah in 30 AH at the age of sixty-five. He transmitted some traditions of the Prophet (ﷺ).

⁷ Ḥātim al-Ṭa'ī: A Christian Arab poet of ancient Arabia, was the epitome of the Arab hospitality and generosity among the nomadic society in pre-Islamic Arabia.

⁸ He is known as Ash'ab the greedy who always sought more than what he has and never felt content.

⁹ Arabs give the example of al-Kasa'ī to express the great regret of a person. The story of the man that spent a lot of time making a special arch to hunt with it and so he made five arrows. He tried them on a herd in the wild but from where he was standing he thought he missed all the targets. Upon which he got angry and broke the arch but as soon as he arrived to the location he found the cattle on the floor dead because of his arrows and so he regretted breaking his arch.

CHAPTER THIRTY FOUR

Night Prayers

O YOU WHOSE NATURE is unyielding and whose heart is inclined towards his nature: think of the purpose for which you were created, and what is it that Allāh made incumbent upon you. If you wish to ride the stallion that is your soul, then you must tame it, and counteract the effect of your mercurial nature, so that you can harness it for proper use. Look for the dawn of reward during the nights, and pour out the intoxicant of your desires, so that you do not get caught by the One in authority [i.e. Allāh].

The water of your nature is brine, whereas the water of your heart is sweet, your intellect standing between the two as a barrier, just as al-Khidr's firm stance. So be like Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*), and do not abandon your self-discipline until you arrive at the meeting point of the two oceans. Stand on the leg of patience [praying all night] even if standing is too wearisome, as it is better than sitting down. O you who has been asleep all night long, the company has already left, and the sun of old-age is upon you and yet your sleep does not end. If you had been awake in the last part of the night, you would have seen how the road of the pious

slaves is crowded and had you gone to drink from the well of Madiyan¹, you would have found many people quenching their thirst from it.

How bright is the night of the pious, which is spent by them in worship; they remaining standing, leaning on the pillar of their fear of Allāh, as they approach the road of longing to their Lord, as the night covers them under its roof. When they sigh [out of their love to Allāh] they are more adoring than a lover, and when they mourn [from fearing Allāh and their love towards Him] they are more eloquent than al-Khansā.²

They found the right path, and hence walked on it;

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا

“Indeed, those who have said, ‘Our Lord is Allāh’ and then remained on a right course.”

[*al-Fuṣṣilat* 41: 30]

But how far behind are you from even catching the traces of dust left by their caravan trail! Their hope does not stretch far at all, and their houses are more austere than a grave, their sleep is rare and their conditions are softer than a breeze. For them, spending the night in prayer is more joyful, than sleeping at night after waking up. Whenever they recite a *Surah* from the Qur’ān they reflect on it as passionately as Ya‘qūb (*‘alayhi as-salām*) when he

¹ The tribe of Prophet Shu‘ayb (*‘alayhi as-salām*).

² She is Tamadur bint ‘Amr Ibn al-Ḥārith al-Salamīyyah; the famous eloquent female poet whose eloquence was incomparable. She embraced Islām when she was very old and was in constant sadness because of the loss of her father and two brothers who were killed in battles before Islam.

caught a waft the Yūsuf's (*alayhi as-salām*) aroma.

Be present during the last part of the night, and join the worshippers long enough to witness the lavishing of the King's gifts upon them, because even if you were not amongst their party, you might at least receive a portion of what they received [i.e. you will be as those whom Allāh said about them],

وَإِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ أُولُو الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ
وَالْمَسْكِينُ فَأَرْزُقُوهُمْ مِنْهُ

“And when [other] relatives and orphans and the needy are present at the [time of] division, then provide for them [something] out of it [i.e., the estate].”

[*al-Nisā'* 4: 8]

When you exhale, giving out breaths of regret, they rise and form clouds, to patter upon you drops of forgiveness. And if you shed a tear on the cheek of repentance, you will give life to your barren heart.

CHAPTER THIRTY FIVE

High Aspirations

O YOU, WHO WISH TO STAY in a place other than his; O you who appreciates safety after experiencing wreckage and ruin: take advantage of your life, the bricks of which time brings down day after day; for you know that the end of life is death! So admonish yourself by being cognizant that your existence will come to an end.

Woe to you, pursue asceticism in order that it brings you out of this life, stuffed with nothingness, and stations you in the presence of the Divine. Neglect the demands of your vain desires, for if you reach that high position, never again will you experience the loss of a beloved, or have any of your wishes remain unfilled.

O you, the best guide to show you the right way is your heart (i.e. intellect), and the most ignorant of guides is your desires. So, walk as per the directions of your heart, and pay no heed to where your desires try to direct you.

O you whose endeavors are high, mount the back of strong

will, no matter how long the journey is. It is a propitious sign to tear apart the chains of lassitude, and the sign of failure is to be in the company of wishful thoughts.

Your self-desires urge you to seek immediate gratification, but as soon as the knight of your determination closes in, the devil makes his escape, thwarted. O you in love with this worldly life: your value is only that of what you love; if your endeavors were truly high, you would have taken no notice of this worldly life! O you who claim to have achieved the status of a devoted friend [khaleel], do not claim what you are not, because you always favour even the least of your desires over your Lord, and were it not for

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ
حَتَّى نَعْلَمَ الْمُجْتَهِدِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَنَبْلُوَ الْخَبَارَ ﴿٣١﴾

“And We will surely test you until We make evident those who strive among you [for the cause of Allāh] and the patient, and We will test your affairs.”

[Muḥammad 47: 31]

The coin of your deeds would have been concealed. As one poet said:

It is during the times of displeasure, not happiness, that those who love you can be distinguished from those who dislike you

Your heart is in a state of oblivion, due to your over-indulgence in the pleasures of this worldly life! There is no longer any use in talking to you; when the target itself has fallen, then the arrows are of no use. You have used the inebriation of your desires to block the gate to your heart; therefore even the torrent of exhor-

tations and sermons cannot reach it! You left the prosperity afforded to you by piety and ended up falling in an impoverished state due to your errors.

How long have you been resolving to repent and do good? Do not you know that to discipline and correct yourself at an old age is nothing but a burden! Why can't you sight the light of repentance?! You spend the night in devotion as if you were Uwais [al-Qarnī], but when the day commences you turn into the likes of Qays, undoing the bonds of your strong will, link by link; indeed every person whose death is due to his desires is the companion of 'Urwah¹, and you have buried many of those whom you love, but would Kathīr ever stop loving his beloved; 'Azza ?!²

¹ This is one of the most famous emotional platonic love stories of the 1st - 2nd century after hijrah. He was deeply in love with 'Afrā who was wed to someone else upon which he got too sick until he died. It is said that he is the first lover who died because of his love.

² The story of Kathīr and 'Azza is another famous platonic love story similar to the story of Qais and Layla.

CHAPTER THIRTY SIX

Beware of Hypocrisy

BE TRUTHFUL INWARDLY and that shall reflect on what pleases you, outwardly. Use the feathers of sincerity in the arrow of your deeds, and you shall certainly hit the target that you aspire for. I wonder at you, how will you ever achieve your goal, when your bow is broken because of your sins, and its string is cut due to your laziness? If you want to climb up to reach the high ranks, then you should take the stairs of piety, and if you want to achieve glory, then you ought to prostrate the forehead of humility, and if you desire authority then you should build up the pillars of sincerity, because - by Allāh - you can never achieve any of that just by idly wishing!

If you step off the mount of sincerity, you will walk on a bumpy road that will hurt your feet, and worse, it shall never take you to your final destination. Indeed, flaunting [one's deeds] is the origin of hypocrisy, the hypocrisy of the hypocrites is what made a place of worship [i.e. *Masjid al-Dirār*] turn into a filthy place; therefore Allāh ordered [His Prophet ﷺ]

لَا تَفْرَفِ فِيهِ أَبَدًا

“Do not stand [for prayer] within it - ever”

[*al-Taubah* 9: 108]

Whereas, on the other hand, the sincerity of the truly devoted can elevate the status of one whose outer appearance might be dirty and disheveled [as long as he is sincere]; as the Prophet (ﷺ) said “Perhaps there is a person with unkempt, dusty hair who people will hold in low esteem, but if he were to swear by Allāh, Allāh would fulfill his oath”¹

The stormy winds of hypocrisy cannot dislodge the tree of sincerity, because its root is deeply established in the ground, whereas the tree of ostentation is completely uprooted, upon the arrival of the breeze of

وَقَدْ مَنَّا إِلَىٰ مَا عَمِلُوا مِنَّ عَمَلٍ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ هَبَاءً

مَنْثُورًا

“And We will regard what they have done of deeds and make them as dust dispersed.”

[*al-Furqān* 25: 23]

Do not look at the ascendancy of falsehood because it is only temporary; instead, await the establishment of the sovereign state of the truth. If you see a hypocrite having followers, then remember that in the time to come there shall be a Dajjāl [i.e. False Messiah] who too will have amassed followers, just as in the past there was the Sāmīrī² who also had a following. The latter there-

¹ Reported by Muslim (2622).

² He is the man who invented the cow for Bani Israel to worship after they have crossed the sea with Prophet Mūsā (*alayhi as-salām*). He was punished by making his skin cannot bear the touch of anything.

fore was punished with

فَإِنَّكَ لَكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ أَنْ تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ

“It is [decreed] for you in [this] life to say, ‘No contact.’”

[Tāhā 20: 97]

While the former shall suffer a worse fate.

The pine tree takes thirty years to grow while it takes the pumpkin only two weeks to grow. “You need thirty years to do what I succeed to do in just two weeks, yet people still put us on the same footing, calling us both “trees!” the pumpkin plant said to the pine tree sarcastically. The pine tree replies: “Do not be hasty in your pronouncement; wait till the wind of autumn arrives [then let’s see who shall survive].”

How many are those who simulate the righteous in their clothing and humility while, in fact, the mouths of hearts are repulsed by their bitter taste. They are those about whom Allāh has said,

الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعِيَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ

يَحْسِنُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

“[They are] those whose effort is lost in worldly life, while they think that they are doing well in work.”

[al-Kahf 18: 104]

Upon the fall of darkness, during late night, men and trees look like each other, and cannot be distinguished [as men stand still all night praying without moving] but as drawn breaks the difference between them can be made out. At noon time, the mirage looks like water, but as soon as one gets closer to it, he finds nothing!

Beware of Hypocrisy

How unfortunate it is to find plenty of imposters! They outwardly appear [sturdy] like palm trees, but are fragile and empty on the inside.

O pretentious one, the heart of one for whose sake you pretend is in the Hand of Who you disobey. Do not engrave the name of the King on a spurious coin; you should know that not every black piece is a date, nor is the fat better when the meat is swollen.

CHAPTER THIRTY SEVEN

Assembly of Repentance

THE ASSEMBLY OF REPENTANCE is a gathering of grievers; among the attendants you will find those who weep over the sins they committed, others who mourn their shortcomings, some who cry for not achieving their aims, and others who are in grief over not being accepted by their beloved [i.e. Allāh].

Do you know why they [who sit there repenting] mourned and wept? Do you know what evoked their feeling of grief? They remembered a vow they had made, and whose purity they had strived to maintain, but then the vow had gotten tainted, and so their state of heart had changed accordingly.

Whoever hears the cooing of doves may think that they sing because they possess beautiful voices; what they do not realise is that they sing because they remember life that has gone past. Indeed the sinner will cry over the house he built up with piety only to be ruined by sins!

O you once who had a bond with his Lord which he himself undid, O you who became perplexed regarding what he was ordained to do and stopped counting his bad deeds: weep for the days in which you were in contact with your Lord, for such days indeed warrant being cried over. Indeed, the remnants of the beloved engender in the heart nothing but sorrowful memories and concern.

O sinner, time marches along quickly, therefore hasten your repentance. The One who calls people to return and rejoin ties with their Lord says

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا
السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾

“And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous”

[*Āl-‘Imrān* 3: 133]

O you who has a heart, where has your heart gone? Will you ever recover?

If it seems as if your heart has gone missing, do not despair that it exists.

Walk in the valley of seeking your Lord, while requesting His aid with your tongue [in His remembrance]. Bid farewell to your covetous nature, and prepare yourself for the journey of repentance, Bring along the divine legislation to be your companion, seek all means and press forward with haste so that you may catch up those ahead of you, prepare yourself to enter the state of Ihram

before you stand on the mountain of *ʿArafah*, send the troops of yearning to *Minā* so that you may receive a letter of love from the Lord of the *Kaʿbah*, before reaching your destination. Indeed, the pious devotees yearn to meet their Lord, thus the answer comes to them declaring that Allāh longs to meet them even more than their longing to meet him.

CHAPTER THIRTY EIGHT

Truthful Worshipping

DO NOT BE IMPRESSED with the outward image of worship, but rather pay attention to the actual purpose of this worship, for indeed not all those who pray are worshippers, nor are all who fast ascetics, nor all weepers devotees, nor are all who associate themselves to Šūfism, pure.

How many were those who ascribed to piety and abstention in the company of Ma'rūf¹ but their names and figures perished, whereas the name of Ma'rūf, which means known, remains known even after his death.

The people of sincerity [who fulfilled the duties demanded of

¹ Ma'rūf al-Karkhī: Abū Maḥfūz al-Baghdādī described by al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dhahabī as: 'The authority of the ascetics, the blessing of our times.' Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn al-Jawzī has gathered his virtues in a book that has been printed. He passed away in 200 AH. Imām Aḥmad said that he is a person whose du'ā is answered. 'Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal said: 'I said to my father: 'Did Ma'rūf have any knowledge?' to which he replied: 'My son, he had the basis of all knowledge and that is fear of Allāh.'" (Refer to his biography: *Tabaqāt al-Auliya'*, 280, 285, *Tabaqāt al-Šūfiyya*, 83-90, *Tabaqāt al-Ḥanabila*, 1/381, 389, *Ṣifāt al-Safwā*, 2/79-83, *Ḥilyatu'l-Auliya'*, 8/360, 368, *Siyar al-A'lām l-Nubulā'*, (0/339, 345).

them from the knowledge they acquired] left and only the bewildered and confused ones remain behind. Indeed, it makes me wonder! The pious have gone by, while those who remain from the people of Sunnah are falling behind, in a state of stupor. The land is no more inhabited by the loved ones, and what used to be flourishing with worship, has now declined and collapsed.

In previous times, the Shaikhs were known for their diligence in acts of worship and their high degree of piety, while their followers were known for being pain-takers [i.e. willing to endure all hardships to reach their goal to attain the pleasure of Allāh]. However, today pain-takers and worshippers are all but non-existent. The follower used to inquire about that which perturbed him, and his Shaikh would immediately recognise the reason behind that which troubled his students and followers, but today, neither these exist, nor those. Before, the Ṣūfī used to mock the devil, but today they are the ones that the devil makes a mockery out of. Asceticism used to exist in the hearts of people, but today it is only a token superficially appearing on people's attire.

Woe to you, purify your heart and not your outward appearance [i.e. what others can see], you are busy patching up your clothes, while you ought to be rectifying your intention; a person whose lineage can be traced and established to the Prophet (ﷺ) surely does not need to possess two strands of hair.² Why would you learn the songs of camels [i.e. songs to encourage camels to walk fast] when you do not even have a camel? Why would you buy a bow though you do not have a string? Why do you belch when you are not even full? I truly wonder at you! How could a woman deliver if she is not even pregnant! If you will not have the perse-

² It seems that having two strands of hair at that time used to be from the known characteristics of *Ahl al-bayt* and Allāh knows best.

vering hopefulness of Ya'qūb (*'alayhi as-salām*) then at least be not as desirous as Zalikhā. I feel pity for hearts that have been melted by their love for this worldly life, and for minds whose hopes are based on occult fabrications; they are being manipulated in the sea of desires just as how waves play with the one drowning.

Call those who have cut themselves off and moved to the valley of heedlessness! I wonder what sin made them remove themselves from the crowd of the pious!

Where can I find a worshipper who worships his Lord in the manner of al-Sarī?³ Where can I find a person as determined and persevering in worship as al-Junayd⁴ was? Where can I find a person who strives and struggles with the intensity of Abū Yazīd? Who can withstand the pangs of hunger like Al-Shublīt?⁵ O you who likes to be compared to Ibn Adham, why do you not have his strong will and determination? Indeed, all tents look the same [but the inhabitants are different].

The spindle of Rābi'ah⁶ is broken and the cotton of al-Ḥallāj⁷

³ Al-Sarī al-Saqtī, the Imām of ascetics and the famous pious worshipper from the 3rd century after Hijrah.

⁴ *Al-Junaid*: bin Muḥammad az-Zujjāj, Abū al-Qāsim. He was a Legal Jurist who followed the school of Abū Thawr and was known for asceticism. He died in the year 297H.

⁵ From the pious ascetics

⁶ Rābi'ah al-'Adawiyyah; the famous ascetic female worshipper. Rābi'ah al-'Adawiyyah: Umm al-Khayr bint Isma'il, the pious, covered, ascetic and God fearing worshipper from Basra. She is said to have lived for 80 years and died in 180 AH. The narration was related by al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dhahabī by way of Ibn Abi

is all what remains today. [i.e. none of what they did benefited them afterward]. None the less, all that has remained with us of the pious of yore, are their tales and accounts.

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al-Dunya: We were told by Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn, I was told by ʿĪsā ibn Maymun al-ʿAttār, I was told by ʿAbda bint Abī Shawwāl who used to serve Rābīʿa al-ʿAdawīyyah: Rābīʿa used to pray the whole night. When morning would come she would lay down till the sky would turn to yellow. I used to hear her say: 'My soul, how much do you sleep and till what time do you stand up? You might sleep for just a little and never get up until the Day of Resurrection.' See (*Ṣiyar al-Aʿlām al-Nubulāʾ*, 8/242, *al-Iḥṣān*, 1/278), Ibn Khalakān (*Wafayāt al-Aʿyān*, 3/215), Ibn al-ʿImād (*Shatḥarāt al-Dhahab*, 1/193), Ibn Kathīr (*al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah*, 10/186), al-Khāṭib al-Baghḍādī (*Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2/40) and Ibn al-Jawzī (*Ṣifāt al-Ṣafwa*, 4/17-19). Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn al-Jawzī even dedicated a book for her virtues as mentioned by al-Dhahabī (*Ṣiyar al-Aʿlām al-Nubulāʾ*, 8/242) and also named his oldest daughter and mother of his grandson Abū al-Muẓāfir (the author of *Mirʾāt al-Zamān*) Rābīʿa.

⁷ He is al-Ḥusayn ibn Mansūr al-Ḥallāj, who was known as Abū Mughhith, or Abū ʿAbd-Allāh. He grew up in Wāsit, or it was said in Tāstar, and he was connected with a group of Ṣūfīs including Sahl al-Tustarī, al-Junayd, Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Nūrī and others. He traveled to many places, including Makkah and Khurasan, and India where he learned *sīhr* (magic, witchcraft). He finally settled in Baghdād, where he was killed. He is liked by most Orientalists, and they think that he was killed wrongfully because, as we shall see below, his beliefs were close to Christian beliefs and he preached a similar message. He was executed in Baghdād in 309 AH, because it was proven by his own confession and otherwise that he was a *kāfir* and a heretic.

The scholars of his time agreed that he was to be executed because of the words of *kufr* and heresy that were narrated from him. The following are some of the things that he said:

- 1- He claimed to be a Prophet, then he went further and said that he was God. He used to say, "I am Allāh," and he commanded his daughter-in-law to prostrate to him. She said, "Should I prostrate to someone other than Allāh?" He said, "There is a god in the heavens and a god on earth."
- 2- He believed in incarnation and union with the Divine, i.e., that Allāh was

incarnated in him, and that he and Allāh had become one and the same - exalted be Allāh far above that.

This is what made him acceptable to the Christian Orientalists, because he shared their belief in incarnation, for they believe that God was incarnated in ʿĪsā (*ʿalayhi as-salām*). Hence al-Ḥallāj spoke of divine nature and human nature as the Christians do.

Some of the lines of verse that he composed said: *"Glory be to the one Whose human form manifested the secret of His divinity."*

Then He emerged among His creation in the form of one who eats and drinks."

When Ibn Ḥanīf heard these lines, he said, *"May the curse of Allāh be upon the one who said this."* It was said to him, "This is the poetry of al-Ḥallāj." He said, "If this is what he believes, then he is a *kāfir*."

CHAPTER THIRTY NINE

Contentedness

O YOU WHO IS AFFLICTED with an ardent love for this life, although you shall never attain from it except what is decreed for you: there are many who attain provision without the least amount of effort, and there are many who expend all possible means but never receive any provision. Prophet Mūsā (*'alayhi as-salām*) requested to be able to see His Lord but his request was denied, while Muḥammad (ﷺ) was woken up from to hold an audience with his Lord even though he never asked for it.

Woe to you: poverty is, in reality, better for your affairs, and losing this world should put you at ease; were it for the desirous that they would become conscious of the consequences of their actions! Plenty of good may lie concealed within what you dislike, which you would realise if only the cover over your eyes was removed.

Exalted is He Who ordained for the perfect to get along with the uncouth ignorant nature. The eyes of the mind (intellect) observe the outcomes, while greed only notices the immediate ben-

efit; that is why the old man is exhausted when he attempts to discipline a young boy.

You should know that when you allowed free reign to your desires, they narrowed the road to your salvation. Your desires ruin the capital of your life with a reckless hand just as how an inept imbecile would do with a ball of wool.

O you who seeks help for the removal of poverty by employing his complaining tongue: know that what you perceive as the prison of poverty is actually a protective fortress, and it is indeed a sickness that only nobles suffer from. Poverty is a well and neediness is its depths, whereas self-desires are bonds of slavery; therefore “This worldly life is the prison of believers”

Be like Yūsuf (*‘alayhi as-salām*) who experienced the bitterness and hardship of living in the well and surviving in darkness, being sold into slavery and enduring imprisonment; perhaps, like him, you may emerge after all these hardships into the spacious kingdom of

أَجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ ط

“appoint me over the storehouses of the land.”

[Yūsuf 12: 55]

Brace yourself for the night of hardship, for the dawn of reward is soon to break the night. Poverty is nothingness within which lies the existence of everything, whereas richness is an existence within which lies a void.

The Prophet (ﷺ) was offered enough gold to fill the valley of Makkah but he refused. O Muḥammad, from whom did you learnt contentedness? The state of his being answered: from my father’s

haste.¹ The companions used to be offered wealth that was lawful, but they would refuse because of their contentedness with their state. O you poor people, embellish your poverty with the jewels of silence [i.e. do not grumble about your poverty or make a spectacle of it] for the poor who is patient receives the honour to be among those in the company of Allāh. Endure the thirst of indigence; a free woman would prefer to starve, rather than eat from money she earns from selling her body.² It is indeed an insult to the Master when His slave asks help from someone other than him; therefore always ask help only from your Master. O you heedless ones, who are so focused thinking about the means that you neglect to think of the One who creates the means and causes: it is He, the one Who gives, Who can also deprive and prevent, therefore

فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَدَادًا

“do not set up rivals to Allāh”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 22]

Whenever you are in need of anything, your action should be to immediately head to the niche (*mihrab*) and offer prayer, and suffice with serving your Lord, for he who serves Him shall never be neglected or forgotten by Him. It is He Who said: “Whoever was so preoccupied in My remembrance to ask Me [for his needs], I shall provide him better than what I provide those who ask Me.”³

¹ This is a metaphoric employment of a situation as he refers to how the father of the Prophet was travelling for trade but died without achieving it whereas the Prophet (ﷺ) did not indulge into worldly affairs yet ruled the world.

² When the Prophet (ﷺ) said the injunction of not committing fornication, Hind said, ‘Does a free woman commit fornication?’

³ *Shu‘ab al-Īmān* (572).

Woe to you, a truthful person who is needy abnegates all pleasures and temptations of this worldly life as he sees himself above them; as soon as he saw this worldly life rebuffing him, he in turn immediately boycotted it. His example is like a person who accidentally steps on a dead corpse whereupon he blocks his nose and quickens his pace; he then decides to walk on the road of contentedness where he finds a treasure that eluded even the likes of al-Isqandar. This is because his heart is wealthier and more prosperous than Qarūn even as his house is emptier than the void in Mūsā' (*'alayhi as-salām*) mother's heart [after she sent him away]. As the poet said:

He who wears the robe of contentedness will surely be rich even in
destitution and will find fecundity even in a place of aridity.

When the poor are resurrected on the Day of Judgment they rush to the doors of Paradise to enter, but the Angels stop them saying: Hold on! Today is the Day of Judgment [i.e. you should wait until you are being judged], upon which they display the sleeves of humility and reveal their deficiency, saying: and do you reckon we have anything to be judged for? And then proceed!

CHAPTER FORTY

Dispraise of Tireless Desire for Wealth

O YOU, WHOSE TIME IS FULLY occupied working to gain this worldly life, although this life is actually enslaving you: why do you collect that which separates you [from your Lord] and join that which tears you apart? Woe to you: you are focused on building a palace while, in fact, you are demolishing a country! Seek advice so that you may recognise the shortcomings of this life.

The malady of human beings is vain desires, and its treatment is found in firmness. When an ailment has already reached a very advanced stage, then cauterisation is the best course of action; you cannot prevent the harm of a bad neighbour simply by shunning him. Money is like water; the more you have of it the more you shall drown in it. The spider suffices with a corner in the house to build its home, but the assiduity of the fly to take it ended with its becoming food for the spider. All the while, the voice of exhortation tells you; though people make effort to seek their provision in this life, but many a time it is the provision that seeks out and lands on the doorstep of its rightful owner instead.

Woe to you, divorce your false hopes so you can become the heir to your own wealth. The most deprived ones are those whose hard work benefits only others without benefiting themselves. The greatest good deed that a miser may do is to give charity, because by giving charity he actually combats two devils; the smaller of the two being *Shayṭān* and the greater being his desires and its troops among whose ranks are the lion of covetousness, the dog of desires and the swine of gluttony.

Forward charity with outstretched hands; but if you are unable to, then at least restrain your hands from oppressing others. Liberate your tongue to indulge in the remembrance of Allāh; but if you are unable to do so, then at the very least, restrain it from backbiting.

How long does a beggar stand on your door in humiliation with his tears flowing down his cheek, but you rebuke him by saying, all what you say is nonsense! Indeed, the words of the starving on the ears of the one with a full belly will sound like nonsense! Woe to you, did you not know that charity is the mahr of Paradise! So stop piling up bags upon bags of money and be amongst those regarding whom Allāh said,

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا

“who is he that will lend unto Allāh a goodly loan”

[*al-Ḥadīd* 57: 11]

And if you give charity, beware of saying or doing what may offend or hurt the beneficiary of your charity; the longer your wishful hopes live the more the deaths among the poor.

I wonder at those who greedily amass wealth, only to be dispos-

sessed of it in a single stroke of misfortune! O you with a grieving heart, the agitation of your innermost self is apparent to the onlooker, because the secret emotion of your heart manifests itself through the expressions of your face. Had you heard my words with your heart, you would have paid heed at the time, but my words only reached your ears, and there is a big difference between two. The example of the former is Tha‘labah who jealously guarded his wealth, while the example of the latter is Abū Bakr (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhū*) who forsook all his wealth [for the sake of Allāh]. Indeed there is difference between miserliness and forsaking worldly pleasures for the sake of Allāh.

CHAPTER FORTY ONE

Reviving the Hearts with Tears

O YOU WHOSE EYES IN THIS life are tearless, tomorrow on the Day of Judgment the sun will be brought close to your head upon which the mouths of your veins will open so that each hair in your body will cry on its own. The sky will look like as if violently dusting off its sleeves because of the maelstrom of cataclysms, the stars shall be scattered apart, and then the horror of The Day arrives to rip apart the fabric of the universe.

The blowing of winds in this life might shake trees, but the blowing of the horn shall shake everything in existence; one blow shall bring forth death, while the next blow shall revive. Let this not surprise you; do you not see this scene reflected in the present life, when the blast of winter cold causes trees to become as if lifeless effigies of themselves, followed by the puffs of spring that bring back the spirit of life to these dormant trees.

The winds of this life either rouse or fertilise; so is the blow of the horn on the Day of Judgment, which rouses the bodies and

fertilises the spirits, so that they can come forth to read the book of their deeds. Al-Fuḍayl¹ was dead in his heart due to his ignorance, Ibn Adham had been killed by his desires, al-Subṭī² was ruined because of his wealth, and al-Shiblī was from the foot soldiers of al-Junayd, but when the horn of providential guidance blew, the graves of their heedlessness split open, and they all issued forth with renewed life, as described by the *ayah*,

كَذَٰلِكَ يُحْيِي اللَّهُ الْمَوْتَىٰ

“thus Allāh bring the dead to life”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 273]

It was on account of a single *ayah* that Al-Fuḍayl heard, whereupon his soul was touched by humility and tranquility, and Ibn Adham received admonishment by hearing a single reproachful reminder, upon which he left the city of Balakh³ and headed to the region of Sham (consists of Syria, Jordon and Palestine). This is because the knot in their hearts was easy to undo because of which their hearts were easily released, whereas your heart is full of convoluted knots!

As the river of admonishment arrives at the gardens of hearts, it meets with the dew of a few of these gardens and their waters

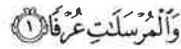
¹ Fuḍayl ibn ‘Ayāḍ: Ibn Mas‘ūd al-Tamīmī, Abū ‘Alī, the Shaykh of Makkah and one of the righteous worshippers. He was trustworthy and precise, noble, having wara’ and narrated many aḥādīth. He used to be in his early life far from religion then at one point he returned to Allāh and abnegated all worldly pleasures until he became well known for his piety and worship. He died in the year 187H

² He used to be a very rich man until one day he decided to indulge in worshipping Allāh completely so he gave up all what he had and dedicated himself to worship Allāh far from the eyes of people.

³ Located in the region of Persia .

mingle together. When the pious used to review their good deeds, they would emphasise that not keeping the oath of disavowing worldly pleasures was tantamount to betrayal. That is why al-Fuḍayl used to cry constantly; to the extent that he used to weep even during his sleep, which used to wake up his family. And Ibn Adham and al-Sarī used to urinate blood because of their fear of Allāh.

When hearts pierce through the siege of desires into the spacious tracts of contemplation, tears will run as if rapid steed in the wide arenas of longing; as if



“By those [winds] sent forth in gusts.”

[*al-Mursalat* 77: 1]

When the stem of the produce of reflection is straight, the wells of tears begin to water the harvest, the exhales of sighs begin to reap, the hand-mills of hope [in Allāh] start grinding, and the flames of concern [i.e. fearing Allāh] ignite, upon which the heart receives its provision of nourishment for the journey of love it is about to embark upon.

Respect the sanctity of promises, for the star of Suhayl does not show up at all times. You have taken life away from your hearts time and again because of your desires, so revive it today with the rainfall of tears. When you leave the assembly of exhortation, do not head back home. Rather rush to the masjids which have been long abandoned, place your foreheads down on the dust and seek the aid [of your Lord] using the tongues of need. Let the words come out of a heart tormented by regret for wasting a life in vain desires and indolence. Because when the sighing breaths of Ya‘qūb (*‘alayhi as-salām*) precipitate due to sorrow, they shall heed not but to the handsomeness of Yūsuf (*‘alayhi as-salām*).

CHAPTER FORTY TWO

Grey Hair is a Sign of the End

O YOU WHOSE LIFE EXCURSIONS have been exhausted in his assiduity, will you not restrain your soul with the leash of contentedness? Do you not know that too much of hard work can cause disability, and eating too many mouthfuls can lead to choking, and too much water can result in drowning. Seclude yourself in the house of solitude, overpower your soul with reproach and address it with an admonishing tongue, saying to it, 'for how long? Until when?' Is not it high time that you return to Allāh? Woe to you, the thief of grey hair [i.e. old age] has stolen the capital of your youth.

O soul, the throne of Bilqīs¹ has vanished, the beauty of Shirīn² has perished, the luxury of Būrān³ has disappeared, and only the

¹ The queen of the Kingdom of Saba' whose story is mentioned in the Qur'ān.

² I could not find her information. [Translator]

³ Būrān bint al-Ḥasan Ibn Sahl the wife of the Caliph, al-Ma'mūn whose wedding was extraordinary (i.e. he furnished for her the floor with a carpet made of gold and threw pearls and diamonds on it and had 200 kg of candles of Musk)

worship of Rābi‘ah has remained.

The days of your youth are like the season of spring, its hours are like the days of *Tashriq*⁴, and living them is like celebrating *‘Īd*. However, as soon as grey hair makes its appearance, it brings with it the promise of death, and informs you of the paucity of your account, thus causing the tight chain holding together your life to loosen, and the pillars of your strength to crumble.

The weakness of old age has swept away youthfulness, its pick-axe starting to work its way into the skin until the comfort of life has become a desolate wasteland, and the meadows of joy to become a desert. Doomed is he who is on a journey that is nearing its end, but has lost the way and has gone astray just when he was about to reach his final destination! Is there a dwelling for you other than the grave after the onset of grey hair?! As if you know where you will settle eventually!

Though old age has put you on the brink of your grave, yet you still seek protection in the fortress of your desires! I really wonder at your wishful hope of yet living a longer life! How is it that you seek month of March even though the month of November has not passed? You should know that gratification is as flavourful as grape juice but it will put you in a distressed mood. Desire cannot see beyond the immediate; whoever foresees that its outcome is in fact a burning fire will patiently endure abnegating it.

Do you think a person who fully indulges himself in the pleasures of this worldly life will ever get his fill? Never! Only those who detach themselves from it will feel contentment and sufficiency.

⁴ The first three days of *‘Īd*

Does the one who keeps delaying and postponing his repentance think that his desires will ever abate? No indeed, for what keeps him from repenting today shall accompany him tomorrow and the day after; it is because with the passage of days it only becomes stronger and more deep-rooted within him. This is evident because "As the Son of Adam becomes old, two of his qualities grow old with him; his love of wealth and his hope of living longer."⁵

The only way to find comfort in this life is by regarding it as a means to an end, not by intimately befriending it. When the pious and judicious realised the flaws and shortcomings of this life, they did not waste another moment of their life in idle play. And so their self-discipline led them to spacious gardens and in the end they settled in the paradise of affability [with Allāh] in the shade of [seeking the Hereafter].

O you who prefers the cemetery of sleep over the gardens of the pious, the path of joining ties with your Lord does not entail exhaustion; because exhaustion is only felt by those whose hearts still contain desires. Indeed, the night is not dark for Layla as it is for others.⁶

The deviated one is astray from the right path; fly you instead with the wings of hope and fear, leaving the nest of apathy behind you; stand firmly on the Right Path, work hard and don't

⁵ Reported by Bukhari (6421) and Muslim (1049)

⁶ Layla and Qais are two famous lovers who maintained a platonic love relation as they were separated from each other and Qais spent his day composing poetry praising Laila and so the night was for them a moment where both remember each other.

become complacent until you are

فِي مَقْعَدٍ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ مَلِكٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ ﴿٥٥﴾

“firmly established in the favour of a Mighty King.”

[*al-Qamar* 54: 55]

CHAPTER FORTY THREE

Characteristics of Worshippers

A PERSON WHO KNOWS HIS LORD should constantly be in the service of his Lord, because he recognises and appreciates the value and importance of time; therefore during the day he observes his duties and fulfills the rights of the King [i.e. Allāh], while his night is dedicated to conveying his love and devotion to his Lord; thus he never finds a moment of repose.

When the perceptive heart ponders the consequences of actions, just as how Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*) did when he was seduced, it cuts off the hands of the covetous self with the knife of longing to his Lord. For them, a camel entering through the eye of needle would be easier than having to hear reproach or criticism with respect to their worship. And when the time comes [i.e. Day of Judgment] those who travelled throughout the night [i.e. worshipping] will rejoice for traversing the long miles [towards the Hereafter] and the tongue of their endeavors will rebut the reproach

فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي لَمْ تُنْفِ فِيهِ

“This is he on whose account you blamed me.”

[*Yūsuf* 12: 32]

Indeed, the more endeavors and aspirations magnify, the less significant the corporeal body becomes.

Yahyā ibn Mu‘ādh¹ said: “let solitude be your abode and beseeching your Lord be your speech; either you die from your illness or you procure its remedy eventually. Some people entered upon Abū Bakr al-Nahshalī² while he was in the market, and they found him bowing and prostrating [i.e. praying] even there. Some people entered upon al-Junayd while he was on his deathbed, and they found him praying. [After he finished] they greeted him and so he replied to their greeting and said: This is not a time for wasting, after which he commenced the *ṣalāh* again.

Their hearts quake out of their fear of Allāh, just as a bouncing ball wobbles when hit with a stick. Thus, their hearts held in palms of anxiety are carried into the vast lands of love, where you find the passionate being overwhelmed while invoking his Lord, the tranquil supplicating freely and the fearful seeking the refuge with his Lord.

Their bodies, once in their prime, have worn out due to their self-discipline; their souls have been bejeweled inside the shell of body; and so both take upon the quest of yearning [for their Lord]. Their tongues are busy in the remembrance of Allāh, their inner thoughts are overwhelmed by Allāh’s love, their eyes shed tears

¹ Abū Zakariyya al-Rāzī, a known pious preacher (d. 285 AH).

² He is amongst the pious worshippers from the city of Kufah in Iraq. (d. 166 AH).

of fear, and their self flees from this life to the house of asceticism.

Whenever people saw al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, they would think as though calamity had just befallen him. Mālīk ibn Dinār³ had a black line running down his cheek from how much his eyes shed tears. 'Aṭā' al-Salamī⁴ used to weep in his room so much that his tears would drain into the gutter of his house; one day his tears splashed on a person who was walking in the street, whereupon the man shouted; O people of the house, is this water pure? 'Aṭā' replied: You should wash it off because these are the tears of a person who disobeyed Allāh. And when Dāwūd (*'alayhi as-salām*) was brought a half-full vessel he would not drink from it until he filled the remaining part of the vessel with his tears.

³ The famous pious ascetic from the city of Baṣrah in Iraq. (d. 130 AH).

⁴ Famous pious worshipper from the city of Baṣrah who lived during the lifetime of Anas ibn Malīk (*radīy Allāhu 'anhu*).

CHAPTER FORTY FOUR

The Crow and the Spider

O YOU WHO OPENED THE GATE to wealth and comfort using a key other than the key of piety: have the impudence to complain about the narrowness of the road of your provision, even though you yourself are widening the road of your sins? If you had piety, nothing of what you seek would be difficult to attain, because the key of piety opens every door. When the pious (who fears Allāh) settles himself down with pure piety, he shall never be harmed. On the other hand, when he deviates from piety, then he shall encounter nothing but distress and aggravation.

The moment you turn away from Allāh, He shall turn away from you. The oceans of His Grace upon the creation remain munificent.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَكْ مُغَيِّرًا نِّعْمَةً أَنْعَمَهَا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا
مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ

“That is because Allāh would not change a favor which He had bestowed upon a people until they change what

is within themselves.”

[*al-Anfāl* 8: 53]

Woe to you, if you recognise the fact that this world was created for you, then why do you think that He who created it for you would keep away from you what is yours? In reality, it is just your desirous nature that is being glutted by worldly pleasures while, in fact, moderation is more appropriate and beneficial for you.

You are the most precious creature to Allāh, so be content with what Allāh has decreed for you, because he who loves never questions or accuses the one he loves. The Grace of Allāh upon you in all that He has created for your sake is as clear as daylight, so how could you imagine that He would neglect when you are at the root of it all?

Greater than the wonder of a fetus in the womb getting nourishment from the menstrual blood of its mother through its connection to her, is the wonder of an egg that has come out of the mother hen, yet it includes within it both the white from which the chick is created and the yolk from which the chick gets its sustenance. This is indeed a wonder that signifies how a creature is provided with its sustenance before it has even come into existence.

When a crow hatches from its egg, it comes out with a white colour. However, due to the apparent difference between the mother crow and the hatchling, the mother fails to recognise its offspring and abandons it at first. The hatchling however keeps its beak open for food, and the Merciful has destined that the flies in the air fly into its open mouth, giving it sustenance, until it develops and its color changes to black, whereupon which the mother unites with her child.

Observe the kindness and compassion of Allāh; He inspires ants to store food and inspires them to break the seed before storing it, so that it does not grow afterwards; He inspires them to break the seed of coriander into four quarters, because if it was broken into only two halves it would continue to grow.

As the poet said:

There is a sign within everything, that proves
that the Creator is One

To see a spider while it builds its house is to witness craftsmanship that would dazzle and confound the architects. It seeks two points that are near each other while at the same time ensuring that there is enough space between them for it to cast its web-silk from one location to the other. Then it secretes its silk and casts it between the two points, and after it assures that the strings are taut, it begins joining the string segments together. While to the onlooker it may seem that the spider's actions are haphazard, however in reality, the spider is actually building a net to trap its food. After completing the web it goes to the corner and waits and keeps a watch out for prey to fall into its trap; if an insect manages to get trapped in its net, the spider straightaway begins reaping the harvest of its efforts. But in case it is unable to trap an insect in this manner, it resorts to a different technique; it finds itself another nook and prepares a web thread connecting the ends, and remains suspended, in preparation for a fly that might pass by; and when a fly draws near, it leaps to capture, and utilises the web thread to wrap the flies legs to prevent it from escaping! Do you for a moment imagine that the lowly spider could have learnt this all by itself? Or did it learn it from others of its own kind? Why do you not realise the wisdom and power of the One

SEEDS OF ADMONISHMENT AND REFORM

who taught it what it knows and Who made it learn? The miraculous creation calls the heedless to observe the signs within themselves, so that they might be guided to the gates of the Creator, but they are unable to hear.

CHAPTER FORTY FIVE

Journeys of Life

FROM THE START OF OUR CREATION, we go through six stages [of life] before we settle down in our final destination:

The first stage: The creation from clay.

The second stage: The semen proceeding to the womb

The third stage: Transference from inside the womb to the outside world.

The fourth stage: Transference from life to the grave

The fifth stage: Transference from the grave to the Judgment

The sixth stage: Transference from the Judgment to the final destination (i.e. Paradise or Hell)¹

¹ For a detail discussion on each of the stages of life refer to the English translation of, '*Awaking from the Sleep of Heedlessness*', published by Dār as-Sunnah Publishers 2012, Birmingham - UK, under the Ibn Jawzī Series.

So far, people have crossed half this journey, but what is about to come is indeed more difficult.

O brothers, the years are like phases, the months are like miles, the days are like yards, and breaths are like footsteps; good deeds are like your capital wealth and sins are like highway robbers; Paradise is like the profit earned from the journey, and Hellfire is the loss. For this reason, the pious make good use of all the time they have, trading good deeds at the marketplace of worship and therefore abandoning worldly pleasures.

Whenever they come across a boat of life sailing in the sea of existence, their dedication to Allāh's worship makes them overlook the wonders of the sea. And as soon as they disembark at their final destination, they become overwhelmed with sense of comfort, and so they are admitted into a land where they are assured a firm bond with their Lord, while at the same time they have assured for themselves a profitable gain for all eternity.

O you whose endeavors and aspirations are low; if you contemplated with an insightful heart upon what these people have gained, your tongue would surely wail deplorably: Oh how I wish I were with them! But in reality, you are as far from them as the sky is from the earth!

Woe to you, the merchandise [i.e. deeds] of the pious have been paid into the safe-deposit of days, and they have sew in the farm of this life the seeds of their love for their Lord. Then when you see them start to reap the harvest of their deeds, the voice of reproach will call you: You are like a person who has wasted a drink of cold water in the sweltering summer!

The barrier of heedlessness was removed from in front of their eyes, so they were able to see without having to look and speak without needing to utter words. The eyes [of the heart] see Him, though He is beyond the grasp of the creation's vision. They exhausted their bodies in the journey of love until they arrived at their final destination; indeed

تِلْكَ أُمَمٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ

“Those are a people who have passed away; theirs is that which they earned and yours that which you earn.”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 141]

Once, a man with a pallid face and emaciated body entered upon ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-Azīz so he said to him: “why do you look that way (i.e. weak and ill)? He said, I tasted the sweetness of this life, and realised its bitterness; and since then I have been spending the nights in prayer and the days in fasting. And all of that is nothing compared to the reward or punishment of Allāh.”

Their hearts have melted in the fires of Allāh's fear, the flames burning the very root of their desires; their skin colours turned sallow due to their fear [of Allāh's punishment] and their heads lowered down in shame. If you wish to know their state and circumstances then you ought to listen to the words they utter in between sighs and breaths [i.e. their remembrance of Allāh constantly between each breath].

CHAPTER FORTY SIX

Incapacity and Lassitude

WHEN THE PIOUS SUPPORTERS of Allāh find themselves engulfed in the darkness of this worldly life, they cut off the threads of their desires by striving and through self-discipline. The paths leading to safety have been lit up for them and they make acquaintance with one another along the way. Whenever the lightning of hope flashes they walk forward, and when the night of fearing Allāh arrives, they stand still in order to pray; therefore they are forever shifting between the state of fear and hope, such that when people see them, they think them to be insane.

During the daytime, the devotee is in a state of anguish due to his being conspicuous among the throngs. The bulbul of his thoughts and feelings is as if locked in a cage that keeps him from revealing his true state and condition. It is only upon the arrival of the breezes of late night does his soul transcend to a state of indescribable divine comfort that extends from the palace of wishes to the land of hope, upon which the yearning traveler starts feeling the gentle breeze of ease while being immersed in a feeling of passion.

O brothers, the day of the one grieving is as dark as his night, and the night of one unaccepted [by Allāh] is like his day. O you whose sight is too blind to discern the path of the pious, Allāh has restored your eyes for you so that you can see the path. However, this is a matter that does not reveal itself to a heart darkened by desires until it is first polished with self-struggle. Your terrain is full of thorns of sin, but had you surrendered it to the One who would cultivate and develop it for you, you would have certainly had different results

يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الْأَرْضُ غَيْرَ الْأَرْضِ

“[It will be] on the Day the earth will be replaced by another earth.”

[Ibrāhīm 14: 48]

Woe to you: your state of bankruptcy [i.e. no account of good deeds] is a result of your dangling between the state of incapacity and slackness.

Whenever the pious used to hear a sermon, it would implant within their hearts a palm tree of strong resolve and lofty endeavor, whereas the effect of a sermon on your heart is only to grow a few grassy shrubs.

I truly wonder at this! I do not know who I ought to describe these people to! Because I feel as if I am reciting the Surah of Yūsuf to Rubell¹ O you who is expelled (from Allāh’s Mercy) yet does not realise it, know that the pain of lashes can only be felt by a person with some feeling left in him, because by Allāh, if you were really distressed by Allāh’s turning away from you, you would

¹ One of the brothers of Prophet Yūsuf (*‘alayhi as-salām*) who participated in the plot against him.

have never been in a comfortable state! Your example with respect to lethargy and apathy is like the two companions of the Judhaymah²; but sadly this admonishment falls on a heart that is deaf!

This rebuke might have been effective had the one being rebuked any sensibility whatsoever! Had there even been embers, I would have tried to blow on it hoping to get a fire started; and despite there being a field ready to be harvested, food is still unavailable. The fence of your piety is full of breaches, and your foes have already surrounded your land, there time is precious little time, so do not delay any longer in rectifying your deeds. Be generous, before you are judged and criticised. Woe to you, the moment of your departure from this world is ever near, yet you have neither set aside for yourself fruits of good deeds to stave away the pangs of your hunger, nor filled your bottle with the drops of your tears, to cool down the heat of your midday sun. So arm yourself with earnest resolve earnestly for the long journey ahead of you, and thus live, without falling into the traps of your desirous self.

O you who is left alone in the desert of his desires, cut off from his companions, hasten so that you might catch up with your people because the leader of your traveling group does care for the straggling members of his group; press on ahead without making any stops, even if your feet have become swollen. If you are held up on your way by the caravan of fatigue, seclude yourself up from everyone and call out for help while shifting between hope and fear of your Lord.

² Judhaymah al-Abrash who killed his two companions; Mālik and Aqīl, the sons of Fārij, while they were all drunk. after waking up from his drunkenness Judhaymah regretted deeply what he did.

O hermit of this monastery, has any travelling caravan passed by you? How sad it is for one whose regret is of benefit for him no longer. This is because hands of idleness and languor manipulated his time; thus he ended up lost, and the palms of old age broke apart the hand-hold of his youth, and thus he ended up ruined.

O you who pray at night, kindly intercede for those who spend their nights in slumber; O you whose heart is alive, be so kind as to ask for the Mercy of Allāh to be bestowed upon the one whose heart is dead; O you, the ambassadors of endeavor, kindly deliver the letters of the distressed.

CHAPTER FORTY SEVEN

Condemnation of *Shayṭān*

O BROTHERS, THE CARE OF ALLĀH is a source of perpetual wealth.

When it was ordained by divine decree before the beginning of time, that low-lying mud [Adam] would be favoured over rising fire [Jinn], Hell recognised that the latter was of the same essence as itself. Dust resisted fire and thus overcame it; and this itself was sufficient as a lesson for Hell; and indeed fortunate is the one who learns from others' experiences. And thus when the believer passes over it, Hell submissively says, 'pass, for your light extinguished my flame.'

Pure hearts are lamps that illuminate from within the innate nature of beings, prior to any form of divine revelations,

يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ

"whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire."

[*Nūr* 24: 35]

As soon as the light of guidance shone out from the house of *al-Khayṣaran*¹, 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb found himself standing on its doorstep.² On the other hand, when the heart of *Shayṭān* became blind, the daylight of guidance became as dark as the night for him, because his heart's eye was deformed therefore the way of guidance, despite its clarity, was of no benefit to him. His example is that of a bat that returns to its nest saying to the other bats, stay inside and sleep for the night has just fallen, but they reply to it saying: It has just been sunrise and yet you say it is nightfall! And the bat replies: please show mercy to one who is unable to distinguish sunrise from sunset.

As soon as the lights of Prophethood shone, the eyes of Bilāl the Habashī (*radīy Allāhu 'anhu*) [i.e. whose status was low at that time] caught sight of it, whereas the eyes of Abū Ṭālib the Qurayshī [whose status was high at that time] failed to see it. O brother, beware of the arrows of Allāh's Power and be warned because your vigilance will not avail you. That said, do not let some of your sincere good deeds put your heart at undue ease, on contrary, you should be more concerned, knowing as you do that "The hearts of individuals are between two Fingers of the Fingers of Allāh and so He changes them as He wants"³

Whenever judges are litigated by others, the case always goes in

¹ It is the house of al-Arqam ibn Abī al-Arqam (*radīy Allāhu 'anhu*) in Makkah which the Prophet (ﷺ) and Muslims used to gather inside in secret before migration to Madīnah.

² This refers to the incident when 'Umar (*radīy Allāhu 'anhu*) came to the Prophet (ﷺ) while he was with his companions in the house as he wanted to declare his Islām.

³ Reported by al-Tirmidhī (3522)

favour of the judge.

The example of *Shayṭān* is that of a town that once prospered with worship, but a winter thunderstorm came and struck it down, causing the death of all its inhabitants; so the house of deeds of *Shayṭān* and his ilk became as Allāh says,

فَتِلْكَ بُيُوتُهُمْ خَاوِيَةٌ بِمَا ظَلَمُوا^{*}

“So those are their houses, desolate because of the wrong they had done.”

[*al-Naml* 27: 52]

Thus the garment of *Shayṭān*'s prior worship was taken away from him and reduced to the grade of the discarded food of the dog of the companions of cave; therefore this pitiful creature expressed his enmity against mankind, sparing no time or effort in striving to bring about mankind's downfall. However, Allāh defused all his plans and decreed that “he who digs the hole is the one who falls in it.”

Woe to him [i.e. *Shayṭān*], What was Adam's (*alayhi as-salām*) fault, when it was he [*Shayṭān*] who brought about his own ruin and downfall? Rather, it was his frustration for what he had lost; the pride of

أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ^ص

“I am better than him”

[*Sād* 38: 76]

Caused *Shayṭān*'s ruin whereas the humility of

رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا

“Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves.”

[*al-A'raf* 7: 23]

saved Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*), because true servitude to Allāh necessitates lowering one's self in humility before the Lord.

The wretched *Shayṭān* thought that by his refusal to prostrate before Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*) he was saving his pride and dignity while, in fact, his refusal subjected him to the humiliation of

وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ لَعْنَتِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴿٧٨﴾

“And indeed, upon you is My curse until the Day of Recompense.”

[*Ṣād* 38: 78];

Thus he became like the person who escaped rain by standing under a gutter. Indeed the garment and adornment of worship was not fitting for him, and hence it was taken away from him.

Shayṭān's understanding was flawed and abnormal, and not for one such as him to uphold the adornment of worship, whereas Adam (*'alayhi as-salām*) had sound understanding, therefore the hood of dispute did not at all suit him. The mandate of decree had served to bring out the distinctive characteristics and behaviours of each of the two, following which both of them were restored to their respective origins (i.e. *Shayṭān* to fire and Adam to earth).

It is reported that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (*radīy Allāhu 'anhū*) encountered *Shayṭān*, wrestled him and overcame him. If *Shayṭān* could have spoken at that moment, it would have said, 'O 'Umar, I have already been struck dead by the sword of humiliation.' 'O 'Umar, [before Islām] you did not recognise the road [to Allāh]', while,

on the other hand, I used to be in a state of power and authority and even had Angels under my command. However, the declaration of

لَا يُسْأَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْأَلُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

“He will not be questioned as to that which He does,
but they will be questioned.”

[*al-Anbiyā'* 21: 23]

was made, and thus I was removed from my position and He replaced me with you; so be wary of the change of conditions and circumstances, for the sharp sword that killed me is still in the Hand of its owner. This continuous concern [over his state and his outcome] is what made 'Umar (*radīy Allāhu 'anhū*) always rush to Hudhayfah (*radīy Allāhu 'anhū*)⁴ [who was the keeper of Prophet's (ﷺ) secrets and the one whom he trusted on the names of the hypocrites; and 'Umar feared that his name might be among them due to his constant mindfulness to Allāh and his fear from Him].

⁴ As the Prophet (ﷺ) informed Hudhayfah Ibn al-Yaman (*radīy Allāhu 'anhū*) of the names of the hypocrites living in the Madinah, 'Umar (*radīy Allāhu 'anhū*) used to ask him whether he was included amongst the hypocrites? To which Hudhayfah (*radīy Allāhu 'anhū*) informed him that he is not one of the hypocrites. See *Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah* (37390).

CHAPTER FORTY EIGHT

Solitude

THE BELIEVERS ARE UPON the purity of *Tawḥīd*¹ from the moment Allāh said,

أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَى شَهِدْنَا

“Am I not your Lord? They said, Yes, we have testified
[that You are our Lord]”

[*al-A'raf* 7: 172]

but when mankind debase themselves with the dirt of their desires, the garment of their deeds became stained. To get the stains off there is only one way; and that is to clean the garment with the water of knowledge in the house of solitude.

Solitude is the best diet for the one seeking to renounce worldly pleasures. When you blind the eyes of the eagle of your desirous self, it will no longer be used to flying. The example of solitude is

¹ *Tawḥīd*: the foundation stone of Islām, the absolute belief in the Oneness of Allāh - His being the sole Creator and Sustainer, His being the only One deserving worship and His being unique with respect to His Names and Attributes.

like an arid desert far from every inhabited land, in which doom is sighted in every direction by those who see it with their hearts. Indeed, the plants of solitude produce fruits of affability [in the company of Allāh].

O novice, consign yourself to seclusion, for it is the basis of good deeds; with it you will collect the scattered parts of your heart, and preserve your perspicacity. Your analogy is like that of an old, torn garment; if you as much as move while wearing it, it will fall down. When it has been decreed that your intellect and conviction be gathered inside the house of contemplation, blame falls on your [desirous] self that is prone to committing sins. When the period of [spiritual] illness ends, the ensuing self-reproach provokes a determined and radical revolt, whereupon your inner self writes down its divorce from its desires with the hand of abandonment, wears the robe of asceticism and becomes a recluse in the monastery of austerity, and so it becomes aloof from the inhabitants of this world in favour of seeking the company of Him who said, "I am the companion of one who remembers Me."²

O you, whose heart mourns a loss as distressing as Ya'qūb's (*'alayhi as-salām*) loss of [his son] Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*), roam the tents of the pious so that you might find the scent of Yūsuf (*'alayhi as-salām*), stand up [praying] in the late nights, on feet of humility, and invoke the Lord [by saying],

يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ مَسَّنَا وَأَهْلَنَا الضُّرُّ

"O ruler!, adversity has touched us and our family"

[Yūsuf 12: 88]

² *Shu'ab al-Īmān* (680).

O whose indifferent attitude has failed him yet he holds on to hollow hopes [to live long], the ship of your life has sunk in the sea of indolence. Woe to you, he who is apt to sleeping excessively will see only dreams! When will the time come when you finally open the eyes of strong will and endeavor? How much longer will you waste your life in dreams? Do you not long to breathe the late night breeze [which is best time to invoke and pray]? Do you not feel the coolness of Fajr? Do you not mark the light reflecting off your grey hair? Are you not hurt by time re-proaching you [for wasting your life in vain]?

The beloved devotees mounted the backs of their firm determination and pressed onwards in their journey; they have arrived at the house where they bond with their Lord through firm ties, and here you are, still asleep! O you, whose strong will ought to be like 'Umar's, how much more will you tarry before you make your way to the house of al-Khayzaran? O you whose love for his Lord should be as deep as al-Fuḍayl's was, when will you break the sword of extravagance [i.e. having more than you need]? O you whose endeavors ought to be as ardent as Ibn Adham's, the time for pilgrimage has commenced, so what are you doing sitting at home in Balakh?³

³ Name of a city located in Iraq.

CHAPTER FORTY NINE

In the Saying of Allāh: *“Indeed, those for whom the best [reward] has preceded from Us”*

WHEN THE DETERMINATION to return to Allāh is firmly planted in the heart of

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِنَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ

“Indeed, those for whom the best [reward] has preceded from Us.”

[*al-Anbiya'* 21: 101]

The basis of his desires will be uprooted from the garden of hope.

Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham was preparing himself to attend a hunting expedition, but the trap of

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ يَهْدِيهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِإِيمَانِهِمْ تَجْرَىٰ مِنْ
تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿١﴾

In the Saying of Allāh: "Indeed, those for whom the best [reward] has..."

"Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds - their Lord will guide them because of their faith. Beneath them rivers will flow in the Gardens of Pleasure."

[*Yūnus* 10: 9]

had already been laid for him, surrounded by the snare of

يَقْوِيهِمْ وَيُحِبُّهُمْ

"people whom He loves and who love Him."

[*al-Ma'idah* 5: 54]

Thus he had become the hunted even before he could hunt. The interpreter of his desirous self unraveled the language of

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِنَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ

"Indeed, those for whom the best [reward] has preceded from Us."

[*al-Anbiya'* 21: 101]

And he came to the realisation that this [idle play] was not what he had been created for, nor had he been commanded to engage in it! The Doctor [i.e. Allāh] prescribed him a special medicine which cleansed and evacuated the colon of his base self; He shot him with the arrows of exhortation, putting an end to his misery and suffering. Thereupon catching a glimpse of the fire of guidance that had been lit for him, he shouted to the soldiers of his desirous self

إِنِّي أَرَأَيْتُمْ نَارًا

"Indeed, I have perceived a fire."

[*al-Qaṣaṣ* 28: 29],

And he found his heart drawn towards the One who is "the

companion of he who remembers Me” and whose manifestation rendered him unconscious. When he awoke from the overwhelming daze of his devoted love which had caused the mountain of his desirous self to crumble to dust, his penitent tongue shouted rightfully

تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ

“I turn to You in repentance.”

[*al-A'raf* 7: 143]

Then, after he left the lands of heedlessness, his newly-found awakening said to his desires:

I greet all pleasures, playfulness and recklessness; but this greeting is not to welcome them, but rather a farewell saying goodbye.

O Ibn Adham, why not return to your palace with the intention to use it to worship Allāh? His desirous self suggested. However, his strong will and determination overturned this suggestion, saying, “Nay, by law [a desirous self] that is divorced thrice is entitled neither accommodation nor compensation.” And from that moment on, he roamed the desert of devotion to his Lord, his mind was relieved of the illness caused by excessive indulgence, so he started to enjoy the taste of hunger and despite his sensitive skin he was able to endure clothes made of coarse wool.

As soon as the beauty of the Hereafter revealed itself to him through the words

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ يَهْدِيهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِإِيمَانِهِمْ

“Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous

deeds - their Lord will guide them because of their
faith.

[*Yūnus* 10: 9]

His love for his Lord rooted itself firmly in the depths of his heart, and thus he tirelessly busied himself in collecting the mahr [of Paradise] through the means of his indigence. The wait to meet his Beloved became so long for him that he became as if a guardian of the gardens. His love [for his Lord] pardoned what he still owed in *mahr* (dowry), and his soul left his body in a strange and remote land! Indeed, this is the price of Paradise, so let the penniless step behind.

CHAPTER FIFTY

Determination is the Way to Success

O BROTHERS, the enemies are many in number, so
وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ

“And prepare against them whatever you are able of
power and of steeds of war.”

[*al-Anfāl* 8: 60]

fight them using the weapon of your strong will and determina-
tion

حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةً

“until there is no *fitnah* [persecution].”

[*al-Anfāl* 8: 39]

As soon as the knight of your earnest resolve fought them

فَقُتِلُوا هُنَا لِكَ وَأَنْقَلَبُوا صَغِيرِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾

“They were defeated and became debased.”

[*al-A'rāf* 7: 119]

O brothers, when you foresee the sweetness of what awaits of

you ahead, you will take no notice of the bitterness of endurance that you must taste at present. The end objective is the first thing that one ought to take into consideration, and it is the last consideration that outlives all other matters, it is the starting point from which the intellect contemplates, and the ultimate destination that one should set his aim for.

O brothers, strive hard to seek, Paradise because Hell is always at a hand-span; the alluring pleasures of life are but traps that hinder you from reaching your goal [of strengthening your spiritual bond with Allāh]. And when all desires are rendered void upon the visitation of the Angel of death, it is then that the doomed comes to the chilling realisation of his predicament, just as how in the heat of the battle, the rush of adrenalin distracts the fighter from feeling pain, but as soon as the battle ends and he is safe does he begin to experience the pain; such is the experience of the former, that as soon as they pass away are they roused [from their heedlessness].

And despite the many funerals you have attended and the countless people you have buried, and despite hearing the heartfelt admonitions that the death of others delivers to you, but still

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ

“Then your hearts became hardened after that.”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 74]

By Allāh, the supplies [in your possession to survive on] are fragile, and your travelling luggage is light, even though the journey is critical and the matter is crucial; thus a sensible and resolute person remains cautious until he reaches his place of safety. When *Shayṭān* said to Imām Ahmad while he was upon his death bed, You have succeeded in escaping my traps, thus I can no longer

deviate you. Imām Ahmad replied, 'Not yet' (i.e. I am only safe after I die). Is there any joy in travelling to the city of Kufah without passing through the city of *Aqabah*¹? Indeed, greed is the sea vessel of ruin, whereas purposefulness is the ride to success, unwarranted complacency is the germ of poverty while idleness begets all loss.

O brothers, the entire lifetime has been wasted in neglect! When the guardian was negligent the wealth of the child under his custody was wasted! Indeed, neglect is an affliction that we all suffer from.

The pious travelled in the darkness of the night and arrived at their final destination [i.e. receiving the love of Allāh for praying all night] by dawn, and all the while you are on a completely different road, and your lack of remorse and regret itself warrants regret; how sad it is for not feeling sorrow for missing all this. Stand there looking at the traces of these travelers, and lament those who were left behind.

O house of the beloved, where are your residents? O lands of the beloved, where are your inhabitants?

O you who lagged behind, do not offer excuses for not having joined the procession of travelers [i.e. praying at night]. The group [i.e. those who spent their nights worshipping Allāh] left already, while you were fast asleep. Instead, weep and mourn the loss of what you have missed upon waking up, in the hope that you may be granted the company of "you shall find me your companion."

¹ A city located in the south of Jordan.

CHAPTER FIFTY ONE

Consequences of being Neglectful

AS SOON AS YOU RISE from a gathering of remembrance you should quickly make your way to the house of solitude, ensuring that you stay there for a while; seek the advice of your meditation, bring to account all the parties involved in the betrayal [i.e. limbs that committed sins during your stay with others], and gather up what negligence and laziness caused you to squander from the capital of your lifespan; grieve over every sin as well as every lost opportunity to perform a good deed.

Hasten to benefit from what remains! Let the delinquent collect what he has missed; let the one-eyed person be careful of stones thrown in his direction in case they hit his only sound eye.

Do not underestimate the value of even a simple good deed.

Your hearts have lost the way in the desolate land of vain desires so rise now on the feet of endeavor, pay no heed to the crowded road and strive to make full effort, seeking whatever means are available to you; just as Ya'qūb (*'alayhi as-salām*) directed

his sons

أَذْهَبُوا فَحَسَسُوا مِنْ يُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ وَلَا تَأْسُوا
مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ

“go and find out about Yūsuf and his brother and despair not of relief from Allāh”

[*Yūsuf* 12: 87]

Take all means to recover what you have lost and do not despair from the Mercy of Allāh; indeed many people have been healed though they were on the verge of ruin.

I wonder at how observant the bodily eyes are, even though the hearts have turned blind. If the spring and its flowers, the sounds of chanting and its lyrical cadences cannot move you, then who and what will? Woe to you: the mourning of doves is their expression of love; so if there was in your heart any place for loving your Lord, then cry just as how al-Junayd used to weep, and you might chance upon the secrets of Sirīn. Sell the wealth of your desires for the sake of the One who will reward you more richly, if you wish to attain the rank of Abū Yazīd.

How many opportunities have called out to you but you have missed out! Indeed, the mercy of Allāh is spacious and encompassing; it is only that ignorance is expelled by whatever contains it.

Woe to you, the fire of guidance has appeared from the tinder of sermons that carry admonition, so stand upon resolute feet and strive hard so that you might find guidance near this fire.

I wonder at those who have halted to a standstill at ‘if only

Allāh were to guide us!’ when they do not even seek out the means of guidance, because in reality

إِنْ يُرِيدُونَ إِلَّا فِرَارًا ﴿١٣﴾

“they did not intend except to flee.”

[*al-Abzāb* 33: 13]

Woe to you, the troops of inaction have closed in, therefore,

انْفِرُوا خِفَافًا وَثِقَالًا وَجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ
فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

“Go forth, whether light or heavy, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the cause of Allāh.”

[*al-Taubah* 9: 41]

And take from this life only the bare necessities that you need in order to reach your final destination [i.e. Hereafter]. Indeed, the demands of life and its vagaries can change one’s purpose and alter one’s course, causing the one walking on the path to Allāh to falter, but

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا ﴿٢٠﴾

“whoever fears Allāh - He will make for him a way out”

[*al-Talāq* 65: 2]

Therefore whatever fate has decreed upon you in happiness or calamity

فَلَا يَكُنْ فِي صَدْرِكَ حَزَنٌ مِنْهُ

“so let there not be in your breast distress therefrom.”

[*al-A’rāf* 7: 2]

The indication of Allāh’s love for you is that He safeguards and

preserves in you, your conviction of His Oneness. The instrument of admonishment is a whip to discipline the self and drive it away from the house of indolence. Thus what you may think is torture is actually a means by which to rectify your broken affairs: it is the slits cut in a garment that makes it a robe. Know that "If you had not sinned, Allāh would have replaced you with a people who would sin and then seek Allāh's forgiveness upon which He would forgive them."¹ Indeed, the outreach of love is what preserves the people of refinement, even if the love is buried deep down in the heart.

When Adam and Eve (*'alayhuma as-salām*) ate from the forbidden tree they found themselves encircled by calamitous dismay; thereupon they were hit by the rod of departure, banished from heaven and sent down to earth. Nevertheless, it is the same One Who sent them down Who asks every night, "Is there anyone asking Me so that I may grant him his request? Is there anyone asking My forgiveness, so that I may forgive him?"²

O you who stand in the marketplace full of profit; what did you gain from your visit there? O you who has become cut off from the path of spiritual connection; will you not get back on track? Did you dedicate yourself to your Lord, or to everything else except Him? O Munkar and Nakir³ go down to meet one who has just left the gardens of profit that is located in the house of action and transaction (i.e. *dunya*) and see whether he decided to bring out with him [to the next life] a thorn of doubt, or a rose of

¹ Reported by Muslim (2749).

² Reported by Muslim (758).

³ The two Angels questioning the deceased in his grave.

certainty with which to perfume his mouth when given an affirmative reply of “Yes, indeed” to the question

وَأَشْهَدُهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمُ ٱلأَسْتُ رَبِّكُمْ

“and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them]:
‘Am I not your Lord?’”

[*al-A‘rāf* 7: 172]

Then see whether his good deeds changed his state of prolonged heedlessness? Are his blemishes of the kind that is excused by Allāh? Does the water of his *Tawhīd* reach the size of *Qullatayn*⁴? At any rate, Allāh will look after him, but what is his condition?!

⁴ This metaphor is used in referenced to the known juristic issue i.e. water that hasn’t reaches *Qullatayn*, it can be made impure. *Qullatayn*: Dual of *qullah* (2 *qullabs*). Scholars differed in its calculation today, some said it equals about 203/204 liters, others about 217 liters, and others about 270 liters).

CHAPTER FIFTY TWO

Contemplating One's Departure from this Life

WHOEVER REFLECTS ON THE nearness of the moment of his departure from this life shall surely busy himself in collecting the supplies needed to make this journey. How disgraceful it is when a person barter his precious self for the paltry gains of this life.

The soul is the quintessence of his self, indivisible and perpetual; it is a priceless jewel that cannot be valued; the limbs of the body are merely instruments made to serve it in its journey to Allāh.

Within the receptacle of the heart, there is a fire that is like a burning lantern; life is its light, blood is its fuel oil, movement is its light beams, desire is its heat and anger is its smoke. When Allāh created man, He made the forehead the soul's guard, the middle part a counselor, the back part of the head a protector, the faculty of intellect a teacher, and the sensory faculty a learner. Then He deployed the limbs to be in its service, whether in a state of inaction or motion. He also made this worldly life a battlefield,

and gave him the freedom to move to and fro in his battle array; thus when he defeats his enemies it is as if he has subdued Chosroes¹, but if he is defeated then no one survives.

When the pious became mindful of the journey to the Hereafter, they walked through the darkness of their nature, cutting across it with exertion and endeavor. And when the light of the unseen shone over them

كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشْوَافِهِ

“Every time it lights [the way] for them, they walk therein”

[*al-Baqarah* 2: 20]

Until they arrived at the gates of Paradise, their state of poverty being their sole adornment, their night vigils being their source of pleasure [i.e. as they use to worship their Lord in secret far from everyone's eyes] and humility being their distinguishing characteristic. For too long have they been imprisoned in this world, so they communicate their grievances [i.e. against this life and its temptation and their yearning to be with their Lord in Paradise] to Allāh through their invocation and worship; had you been awake during the night you would have heard the voices of the inmates of this prison.

The birds of their longing [for their Lord] are locked in secret cages of their innermost selves, lamenting out of their yearning desire, late during the night [anxious to meet their Lord in the Hereafter]. Whenever the doves of their anxiety cool, the clouds of their eyes send down a torrent of rainfall. And it is when the Angel of death is about to take their souls that the cage is opened up letting their soul out to seek the soothing Mercy of Allāh.

¹ The Title of the King of Persia.

Momentarily does their soul waver as if dreading the knock of

مَنْ رَاقِي

“who will cure [him]?”

[*al-Qiyāmah* 75: 27]

But as soon as they hear the call of love addressing them,

أَرْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً

“Return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing [to Him].”

[*al-Fajr* 89: 28]

The sweetness of the summon makes them completely forget the bitterness of the cup, and the agony of death becomes ease.

Wounds were insignificant to them, and were content to live in anguish; O you who are distant from them, what are you in comparison to them! Do not think of it as a trivial matter; indeed snatching the star of Canopus out of the sky would be an easier matter than catching up with them! It is akin to polishing a worthless sword, or encouraging an old man to play like a child, or making a wingless eagle fly!

He who has not moved by a subtle suggestion will not benefit from a flood of admonishment or lengthy sermons! Do you see even one arrow from my quiver of exhortations being broken? Aye, maybe it hit the heart of a grieving person without him knowing who the shooter was!

Advance forward purposefully, full of determination, letting victory be your only concern - not your share of the spoils - because glory can never be attained by a coward; the pens that write

the best are those with the sharpest tips.

Awaken yourself from the slumber of your heedlessness, for the dawn of greyness (of your hair) has appeared. Be swift of foot and hasten forward, because the fellowship of the righteous has already left. Beseech your Lord in the valleys of dark nights, so that He might bestow upon you His Mercy. Seek out the traces of those who undertook this journey before you, to ensure that you stay on the right track. And when you catch up with your company, devote yourself to serving their mounts, so that perhaps you might have the good fortune of entering the tent of the one you love.

And our closing supplication is that all praise is due to Allāh, the Lord of the Worlds,

And may the peace and blessing of Allāh be upon
our master Muḥammad, his family and
his companions.

Other Published works of Ibn Jawzī

Disciplining of the Soul

al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū'l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī [d. 597AH]

being a translation of his *'Tibb al-Rūḥānī'*

Know that all that Allāh has allocated for mankind is for the purpose of benefiting them; either to bring forth a benefit such as the desire for food, or to prevent harm such as the capability of anger. That said, when the desire for food is in excess it becomes gluttony and hence, harmful. On a similar note anger when imbalanced within a person becomes mischievous. The aim is not at destroying the natural impulses of the soul, but at bringing them into equilibrium which allow the faithful to approach God without distraction.

This first masterpiece in the series deals with many spiritual diseases - such as envy, greed, uncontrolled lust, sexual appetites, arrogance, gluttony, anger, stinginess, squandering, vanity and attachment to this world just to mention a few - and the qualities that the seeker of God must acquire - such as love, self discipline, humility, identifying one's flaws, preliminaries of spiritual struggle, improvement of character, patience, truthfulness and treading the path of discipline. He explains in a simple but very powerful and effective way to the wayfarers how to have their spiritual diseases healed and what qualities they need to acquire for their journey to Allāh. This marvellous masterpiece has been divided into thirty chapters to facilitate for the reader comprehensive study of each chapter with extensive antidotes from the early righteous predecessors.

ISBN 1-904336-34-5 | 112pages

Sincere Council to the Seekers of Sacred Knowledge

al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū'l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī [d. 597AH]

being a translation of his '*Laft al-Kabid ila Nasiba al-Walad*'

The challenges of parenthood are experienced by all and many times a parent is hard put to ascertain the correct course of action in bringing up a child in the correct Islāmic manner, or, when required, disciplining that child. This treatise is a moving and pertinent advice which Imām Ibn al-Jawzī, himself a great scholar and parent, directed to his carefree and disobedient child. It is important for every parent and child to read since it lays down the principles for providing a solid religious and spiritual education for oneself and one's family, thereby providing the foundation that every Muslim needs in his journey through this world to the next.

The main concept running throughout the work is on acquiring knowledge which is of spiritual benefit, purifying the intention, the challenges, the pitfalls and obstacles the seeker confronts, and acting on the basis of the acquired knowledge.

ISBN 1-904336-33-7 | 160pages

The Disturber of the Hearts
al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū'l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī [d. 597AH]
being a translation of his '*Kitāb al-Mugliq*'

It is known that preachers are specialists in treating the illness of sins and experts in mending the moods of hearts. Therefore, if they find a person falling into despair, they instigate hope in his heart, and if they find a person in a reckless and fearless state, they provoke the fear of Allāh in his heart, this how they treat sickness by using its opposite as a cure.

This third masterpiece in the series deals with the realisation that over-indulging in hope, lacking the fear of Allāh and drowning in wishful thinking are diseases, [which have become a widespread epidemic] infecting people's hearts. Consequently curing these diseases cannot be except with the medicine of intimidation and deterrence. Because when the heart is static and suffers this distracted state, treating it with doses of serenity would be like treating a person who suffers hypothermia with a medication that would lower his body temperature.

Therefore, the author, ibn al-Jawzī collected herein intimidating narrations, warnings against wrongdoings, narratives portraying the punishment and stories that bring discontent to hearts in order to facilitate: the assured to become anxious; the hardened hearts to become softened; the dried tear ducts to become flowing; and the slothful to become motivated.

ISBN 1-904336-35-3 | 112pages

Awakening from the Sleep of Heedlessness

al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū'l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī [d. 597AH]

being a translation of his

'Tanbih al-Nā'im al-Gamr 'ala Mawāsim al-'Umar'

All praise be to the One who made the different stages of life. During these stages, there are those who submit to Allāh's orders and thereby advance, and others who are a wasteful of this time and thereby struck with loss and regret. Indeed, life has been designated so that people [use] to reach the sought after [i.e. Paradise] and to remove all that which causes loss and defect. Whoever lives his life appropriately [as per Allāh's commands], his life will be a trade generating for him Abundant multiplied profits, whereas the corrupt one who does not act accordingly will find his soul ruined. A good deed is written as ten full deeds to seven hundred and more, and a sin makes the upright return to the state of disturbance he was at before.

The eternal life in Paradise and the never-ending immortality which can be obtained by investing this short life appropriately, as whoever wastes his life is indeed a loser. Therefore a sensible person should know the value of his life and should reflect on his state, so that he captures what cannot be restored if it is missed and because of which he might be ruined for wasting.

This fourth masterpiece in the series expounds on the five stages of life: the first stage starts from birth until puberty and this is the stage of encouraging the disciplining of children; the second stage starts from puberty until the end of youth, this is deemed as the stage of youthfulness and protecting the self and struggling against Desires; the third

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stage is the stage of maturity; the fourth stage is the stage of old age; the fifth stage starts from seventy years of age until death, and that is the stage of decrepitude. The start and end of these ages may fluctuate from person to person. Nonetheless their stages are five, a truly magnificent work of genius.

ISBN 1-904336-36-1 | 64pages